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PREACHED IN THE
BRITISH AMBASSADOR'S CHAPEL,
AT PARIS,

IN THE YEARS 1774, 1775, 1776.

BY THE LATE REV.

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MDCCLXXXVIII.

2 E R M O N 2

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

BRITISH AMBASSADOR OF THE

ADVERTISEMENT
OF THE
1807



THE Archbishop of Canterbury, in his letter to the
Bishop of London, dated the 10th of the month of
April, 1807, has been the subject of much
well known and much discussed. Not
was in his official name, with the
late taking, then believed to be a
and, however, for the religious
of his conduct. These things have been
selected from a small number of the
hind him, production of a
his life before he had been
prejudices, which, turning in the mind
angular, delicacy of the mind, which
at last to religious production, which
admitted

a 3

abilities and his virtues might have adorned ; a profession, which offered him such flattering prospects, as few would have had the fortitude to sacrifice to conscientious scruples. To the Author's friends these Sermons will not be the less acceptable, that they are strongly marked with the peculiar character of the Author ; a character, which, with all its singularities, they were accustomed to respect and love, and will long remember with delight. It must be acknowledged that they are not free from the imperfections, which are incident to the compositions of very young men. They contain, however, much which may edify the pious Christian ; nothing which may either give offence to the true sons of the Established Church, or blow the flame of indiscreet zeal in the bosoms of her adversaries. The subjects are chiefly practical ; and if the manner be not the best, the principal fault is, that the Preacher seems, what so young a man may well be allowed to be, a moralist more than a divine.

The



The Editors, however, are well aware, that the difficulties in which the Author's family was left, constitute the best apology for the publication. Nor can they hesitate to make this avowal, justified as they conceive themselves to be, by the liberal contributions of the Public, in a measure which they, in concert with many of her friends, recommended to the widow, as the means of a supply for the education of her son.

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T A B L E
O F
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

PROVERBS, viii. 27.—31.

*W*HEN he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the deep; when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the foundations of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always be-

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fore him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delight was with the sons of men.

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S E R M O N II.

I KINGS, xviii. 21.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him.

S E R M O N III.

PROVERBS xxviii. 20.

He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent.

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S E R M O N IV.

MARK vi. 26.

The king was exceeding sorry, yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which were with him, he would not reject her.

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S E R M O N V.

PSALM cxxxix. 7—12.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me; yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day. Page 111

S E R M O N VI.

PSALM xvi. 9.

I have set God always before me; for he is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall. 135

S E R M O N VII.

PSALM xvi. 9.

I have set God always before me; for he is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall. 155

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PSALM cxix. 60.

I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

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SERMON IX.

LUKE ii. 13, 14.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men.

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Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

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SERMON

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LUKE ii. 29, 30.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.

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JOHN iv. 24.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

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S E R M O N XIII.

[Preached at Paris, the first Fast-day immediately after the evacuation of Long-Island, and the taking of New-York.]

ISAIAH v. 25.

For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

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S E R M O N XIV.

PROVERBS ix. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom : and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.

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S E R M O N XV.

EPHESIANS v. 11.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them. 343

S E R M O N XVI.

PROVERBS xix. 1.

Better is the poor, that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

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SERMON

S E R M O N I.

PROVERBS, viii. 27——31.

*When he prepared the heavens, I was there :
when he set a compass upon the face of the deep :
when he established the clouds above : when he
strengthened the foundations of the deep : when
he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters
should not pass his commandment : when he ap-
pointed the foundations of the earth : then I
was by him as one brought up with him ; and
I was daily his delight, rejoicing always be-
fore him ; rejoicing in the habitable part of his
earth ; and my delight was with the sons of
men.*



S E R M O N I.

IF ever it could be safe to form our ideas of a person's perfections from his own declarations of them, it might be so in the case of Wisdom, for surely never was boast expressed in terms more capable of conciliating belief, than those which are found throughout the whole of this interesting chapter ; in which she is introduced as stating her pretensions, and giving an estimate of the advantages which would arise to mankind from enlisting under her banner. Unfortunately we live in an age in which the progress of that species of

philosophy, whose province it is to deprave the heart, at the same time that it bewilders the understanding, hath taught us to reject every thing that looks like a proof from authority, though ever so much in unison with our feelings and sentiments. We would not believe, though one rose from the dead, unless he had learnt the language of our schools, and could answer all the objections we should put to him from phœnomena that have happened since his death ; much less shall we attend to the declamations of an allegorical personage, who tells us of times prior to the formation of the world, and would gain herself credit from having assisted in the work which we ascribe to chance or necessity.—Let her produce her proofs.—To produce them will be the subject of the following discourse ; in which I purpose to shew cursorily, that Wisdom was the daily delight of the Almighty when

S E R M O N I. 5

when he prepared the heavens, when he set a compass upon the face of the deep, when he appointed the foundation of the earth; principally, that she took a particular joy in the habitable parts of the earth, and that her delight was with the sons of men; in other words, the harmony prevalent in the material and animal parts of the creation, attests the wisdom of the Divinity; the precautions taken for the welfare and preservation of all that exists, attest the wisdom of the Divinity. Never was more engaging subject of inquiry proposed to the meditation of a Christian assembly, since if the Being that made us is not supremely wise, it is in vain we either rely upon his power for protection, or look up to his goodness for reward; he may either be totally unacquainted with the miseries he would be desirous of relieving, or the means he would use for the purpose might

be inadequate, might produce the direct contrary effect to what he intended from them.

In appreciating the merits of an artist, it is usual to estimate the number of his works, the elegance with which he has finished them, and their aptness to answer the purposes for which he has designed them. I shall follow this method in endeavouring to give you some idea of the wisdom of the Omniscient. And first, for the number of pieces that have been produced by the Divine Power. All we see, all we know, all we conjecture. At an immense distance from us, in a space, which the little we discern satisfies us is filled with wonders we have no idea of—the heavenly bodies. Nearer to us, but still within too great a compass ever to be investigated by the greatest degree of accuracy
we

S E R M O N I. 7

we can exert in the pursuit—the habitable world, with its atmosphere, its greater and lesser waters, its mountains, its caverns, its volcanos, its minerals, its forests, its plains, its undescribable variety of vegetation; its animals, that must and will mock the labours of the most attentive observers of them to rank them in a catalogue. Of these, with all the train of arts he has invented, the last, but dearest animal, man.

Such have we reason to believe were the productions of an instant; such were the productions, which every instant of many thousand years has beheld renewing. What an exhaustless treasury must have furnished the materials! What an equally exquisite and indefatigable artificer must have modelled them into such a variety of fine forms!

Of fine forms?—yes, for it would be in vain to urge the merit of hasty execution, if it discovered nothing but a barren facility of workmanship, without any excellence to recommend it. But here again what a source of well-grounded admiration is opened to us, whilst we consider the works of the Divine Artificer in themselves, or compare them with those that have been produced by the noblest of his creatures; though indeed, these too are his, and it is by his enlivening spirit that we have changed the face of the globe which we inhabit, and added other prodigies of our own, to the prodigies that he had scattered through it. For a nearer insight into these original prodigies, form to yourselves groups of the stupendous all I laid before you in the last article, and then analyze the several parts that compose them. Recollect first the
ideas

ideas of grandeur and magnificence, that have at different times been excited in your breasts from the summer's evening by land; moonshine at sea; the mingled riches of the fruitful plain. Do you remember, how elated, how charmed, how composed to every human care, how conscious of internal littleness you used to retire from this inimitable scenery? Take the landscape to pieces. That oak-clad mountain, whose thick shades are a refuge to the beasts of the forest; down whose sides a thousand rills take their course to scatter fertility through the land; under whose friendly umbrage the cattle and the shepherd find an equal refuge from the ardours of the meridian sun — What majesty is there in its conical form! what resplendency in the crystals and ores to be met with in its caverns! what alternate consistency and fineness in the different earths that form it!

what

what strength and compactness in the coats of its trees! what a vivid green in their leaves! what an admirable symmetry in the fibres of them! The inhabitants of the air, with what ease and steadiness do they move in the element that is familiar to them! what an unrivalled plumage do they display! how do their amorous and plaintive notes break sweetly through the stillness of the scene, and diffuse a pleasure which inanimate nature alone is unable to bestow! What a lively subject of comparison with them is the azure vault that encanopies these noble objects! what a mirror in the limpid stream that reflects them! Who can even read a poetical description of such wonders, and not exclaim in the language of the finest of poets, "O Lord, how manifold
"are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made
"them all?" In wisdom indeed! for if this be the voice of him who has only the
mo-

S E R M O N I. 11

momentary impulse of his senses to compel his astonishment and reverence, what must be that of the accurate observer, to whom the microscope shews worlds in miniature, and the telescope an infinity of worlds? What of him, who, having traversed the habitable globe in search of useful knowledge, has had his curiosity rewarded in every new spot he visited, by some beauty of nature, unknown to the country from whence he came? What of him, who having made it his favourite employment to collect the treasures of each clime, sees his whole life glide pleasantly away, without being able to examine half the treasures he possesses? No wonder that the common objects which amuse us should have no allurements for men occupied in such contemplations; no wonder, that having once acquired a taste for them, they should value the goods of fortune only as they give

give them a nearer access to them, and think no dangers too great that can secure the possession of them. They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.

Objects of pity, however, these men would be, if they sought only the pleasure of collecting them, or the puerile entertainment of looking upon the mechanism they did not understand the effects of. Regularly built and finely decorated as the theatre of nature is, it is not till we come to consider how well adapted it is to the fable meant to be represented on it, that we fully understand the sagacity of the Contriver. True it is, that the profusion of objects makes an irresistible impression on the eye; true, that the polish and perfection of each separate part raises in us the greatest admiration of that Being who,

who, having undertaken so great a design, has not left himself without a witness in the smallest part of it ; but all this is little to what we feel, when, after reflecting that the end he had in view was successive preservation, we come to examine the means he has made use of for that end: there it is that the curtain is entirely drawn aside, and the Divinity discovered in the full majesty of his glory ; there it is that the proudest, the most reasonably proud of his creatures, and he that discovered the simple law by which this universal harmony is preserved, and he that made man's first disobedience the subject of his sacred song, renounce the name of wise, which creatures as short-sighted as themselves had conferred on them ; and, thoroughly conscious of their own littleness, ascribe the honour there where it is only due. Ascribe, how justly ! For once admit what near six thousand years experience

experience has well confirmed—that forming a proper receptacle for the creatures he meant to place in it, and successive preservation, were the designs of the Creator, and then consider what a manifestation of wisdom it was to have placed the sun in such a manner as that every spot by turns should be cheered by its appearance, and benefited by the treasures it gives birth to; what a manifestation of wisdom to have made animals various in number, and different in their natures; find each its proper food and nourishment in the country it belongs to; to have furnished each with an apparatus for providing this nourishment, a weapon for its defence, an habitation adapted to its want of it; to have made so many of them abandon their way of life, and change, as it were, their very natures when their young ones stand in need of their protection. How comes it,
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if not from the deepest thought and design, that man possesses those parts double which minister immediately to his occasions; that the most useful to him are placed in that part of the body where they can be of the greatest utility; that those of which the loss would be more fatal, are most remote from danger, and best fortified against its approaches? Why does the eye naturally contract itself, when the light becomes too strong for it? Why does the stomach give such faithful indication of whatever would be contrary to the welfare of the whole frame? Why are the several passages, as well those of the senses, as those through which the aliment takes its course, provided in such a manner with bolts and bars and doors, that shut spontaneously upon whatever has once passed through them, that nothing hurtful to that part of the system it would intrude into, can get through

through, nothing useful can be sent back? Nor is this all; consider the two great points of reason and conscience; the one to teach us how to make our abode here as comfortable as we can; the other to remind us as often as we swerve from our duty. Which of us can take half these precautions for the welfare of the child he loves, which have been taken by the universal Parent for all his children? Which of us has any scheme half so conspicuous, either for the wisdom of the means, or the steadiness in pursuing them?

Why is there not more wisdom still? Why especially are there plants and animals that appear not only useless, but detrimental to the general system?—Such are some of the objections which have been made to the noble work I have been endeavouring to give you an idea of. As to the first,

first, it may be sufficient to answer that, when we sufficiently understand what there is, which we shall never do, as long as we know not a fiftieth part of that earth, which is but a point in comparison of the universe, it will then be time enough to examine what there might have been. As to the second, besides that the plants and animals accounted the most noxious and the most useless, are every day discovered to be useful for some purpose or other; besides that the most dangerous of these are seldom met with in the haunts of men, who have moreover the faculty of discovering the one, and the power to subdue the other: we must remark, that it is not preservation, but succession, that we have established for the design of the Creator. Perhaps (and revelation, so useful in clearing this as well as every other difficulty of unassisted nature, assures us that it is so) what was

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meant was not unallayed happiness here, but a preparation for happiness hereafter; perhaps, what is called natural evil may be as useful as natural good, for correcting the imperfections of a being, who could not be what he is without a power to abuse his perfection; could not be otherwise than he is without ceasing to be free.

The first lesson inculcated by meditating on this divine attribute, is humility. We know enough to be assured God is wise, but we do not know all, consequently we should be cautious how we hazard a judgment of our own, or too hastily condemn that of another. Of the many systems built by ingenious men upon what is certainly known, some may be false, some dubious, many perhaps founded upon partial truths, and more reconcileable with each other than they appear. Judge not therefore, that you
be

be not judged ; determine not, that it may not be determined against you ; but wait with modesty for that hour, when we shall no longer see the edifice by the road side, and as it were by moon-light, but behold it displayed in all the majesty of its perspective, and judge completely of the art with which it has been finished.

2dly. And this is the principal inference to be drawn from the subject ; if he hath exerted such art in clothing the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven ; if he hath taught the stork to make the fir-tree his house, and directed the beasts of the field to hunt for their prey in the night season ; if not a sparrow seems to fall to the ground without his influence ; how much more reasonable is it to suppose he has made the wisest provision for us, who are of more value than many sparrows ? Feel, therefore, as it becomes your natures,

the losses and misfortunes to which you have been exposed ; retire if you will from a world, which unmerited disappointments have taught you to know the vanity of ; disregard the solicitations of those, who not having experienced what it was to meet with a false friend, or lose a hopeful child, would have you wear the same habit of pleasantry and unconcern you wore before you were deprived of your supporters. We do not blame your resolutions ; your tears are just, your sorrows well grounded ; with respect to yourselves, your course is finished ; there is nothing more worth ambition here below. But at the time you do this, let not your sorrows so far get the better, as either to make you distrust your Creator, or neglect the work he may have left you to do. Though having faithfully endeavoured to please him, you cannot discover why you are struck, whilst others not so well entitled

titled to temporal blessings receive them; though you cannot discover how universal good can be produced from partial, unmerited (if it is indeed unmerited) misery; yet believe that he, who shewed such wisdom in the wise gradations of happiness and misery he made you susceptible of, had his reasons for changing the one into the other. Perhaps your innocence would not long have continued to withstand the temptations to which a plentiful income was perpetually exposing it. Perhaps uninterrupted health and plenty had rendered you rather more insensible than you ought, more insensible than you would have been without them, to the cries of those whose bodily pain was increased by the gripe of poverty. Perhaps the child that made your delight was destined one day to become your reproach, or fated to misfortunes that would have affected you still more nearly than your own.

At all events, the day is approaching when all your doubts will be cleared, and if the voice of nature speak not a deceitful language, all your real losses be restored. Abrahams and Hezekiahs,—let the thoughts of that day be henceforward equally your consolation and excitement to act as it becomes you: let it remind you of the virtues of the house of mourning; let it engage you to give the example expected from the bed of sickness. Yet a little while, and the severe, but temporary struggle will have ceased; yet a little while, and the hard task will be exchanged for its rewards; yet a little while, and you shall be caught up in the air by the Lord, and transported into that happy country, the object of your expectations and your prayers, where you will hunger and thirst no more; neither shall the sun
light

S E R M O N I.

23

light upon thee, or any heat, but the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
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S E R M O N II.

I KINGS xviii. 21.

*And Elijah came unto all the people and said,
how long halt ye between two opinions? If
the Lord be God, follow him.*

S E R M O N II.

OTHAT they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end ! Such was the pathetic wish of a legislator, who must continue to attract our admiration, as long as patriotism continues to have a name ; of one, who after having repeatedly declined the arduous and ungrateful task of governing his countrymen, discharged it with a resplendency of virtue, that never has been equalled by the most distinguished of his successors ; of one, who having met with nothing but insults and mortifications in return for forty years solicitude to promote the welfare of his people, died with no other regret than that he was denied the
fatis-

fatisfaction of seeing them settled and triumphant. Such was the pathetic wish of a legislator whom God himself has placed as far above our faint eulogiums, as he hath made him superior to us in dignity and importance, by declaring with his own mouth, that there arose not another prophet since in Israel like unto Moses. But if we cannot do ample justice to a great man's memory, we can encourage others to tread in his steps by reminding them of his deserts; if we cannot hope to rival him in the importance of his commission, we can teach ourselves to execute that, with which it has pleased God to honour us, by meditating on his example. We are told that Moses was exceeding wroth, so that he brake the two tables on which the commandments had been written with God's own hand, when he saw the calf which Israel had made; not so much from a forget-

getfulness of the Divinity, as to be a material representative of his unmaterial essence. What would have been his emotions, if he had lived in an age in which the existence of a first cause is openly denied with impunity ! What would have been his emotions, if after the historical testimony of near six thousand years, that righteousness preserveth a nation ; he had beheld the same ambition of universal domination, the same avarice, the same vanity, the same corruption which overthrew the Greek and Roman republics ; if he had beheld them preparing the same fate to his infatuated countrymen ! What would have been his indignation, if he had seen the contagious vices which more immediately follow the forgetfulness of a Supreme Being, no longer confined to the lofty mansions, where they have lately left so many deep and never-to-be-effaced scars ; but beginning

ning to spread themselves indiscriminately throughout all conditions, and to infect the very sources of all happiness, as well as virtue! Would not he a second time have destroyed the holy records? Would not he have urged his slumbering God to rise and vindicate his sacred rights, by sweeping at once from the earth an ungrateful people, on whom accumulated blessings had had no other effect, but that of making their rebellions more conspicuous, as well as more inexcusable? Far be such thoughts of him, who is declared to have been the meekest, as well as the most charitable of all men; and who in the very instance I have related, though he was compelled to do justice on some of the principal sinners, desired rather to be blotted out of God's book himself, than that the people should not be forgiven the sin they had committed. No, model of each amiable and benevolent

S E R M O N II. 31

quality that ever entered into a human breast, only excelled by him who had nothing of humanity about him but its form; far be it from me to range thee with the unforgiving bigot, whose daily orisons importune his Maker to destroy the larger half of his creation! As superior to him in real zeal, as thou wert superior to him in real knowledge: had it been thy fate to live in times made too conspicuous, alas! by the ingratitude of thy brethren, still wouldst not thou have forgot the tie which bound thee to them; faithful rather to the ruling passion of thy life, thou wouldst have pleaded the cause of God with his people, thou wouldst have pleaded the cause of the people with their God. The one would have had his benevolent eyes directed to the five righteous men still to be met with in Sodom; to the promises he had openly made us in the sight of the heathen, at the two famous

famous æras when he chose us out to be the protectors of his recovered oracles, and when he rescued us from those who endeavoured to ravish the deposit from us. The other would have been conjured not to remain obstinately deaf to the cry of universal nature; not to reject unheard what had the most convincing arguments, as well as the most cogent reasons of interest to recommend it; not to sacrifice all that really distinguished them, to the cheapest and most perishable species of reputation. Jehovah would not have been suffered to go away till he had blessed Israel; Israel would not have been suffered to go away till he had acknowledged Jehovah for his God.

It is from considerations of this kind, that thoroughly sensible of the disproportion there must ever be between me, and those
who

who have been called to a more public execution of this task, I have determined notwithstanding to lay before you the principal proofs of natural and revealed religion, in a set of discourses which I shall deliver alternately with some others on the moral duties. Not flattering myself that I have any thing new to offer, or that ever I can give you the common arguments with the same degree of clearness and energy, as you will find them in the writings of those who have gone before me; but induced to the attempt from the thorough conviction, that faith is the only unshakeable basis of good works; and comforted under my fear of failing in it, from the reflection, that of those who come hither to be instructed, some perhaps may want the disposition, and some perhaps the means and opportunities of procuring themselves more enlightened directors.

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But before I lead you into the presence of the Most Higheſt, it will be neceſſary to engage your attention to the beauties you will diſcover there by ſome preliminary obſervations on their nature : it is for this purpoſe I have read to you the no leſs expreſſive than beautiful words made uſe of by the prophet Eliſha, to induce the indifferent amongſt his countrymen, to think themſelves intereſted in the event of his diſpute with the prieſts of Baal.—“ Why halt ye between two opinions?” Wherein I propoſe to ſhew, firſt, the extreme abſurdity of not chooſing between atheiſm and Chriſtianity, ſuppoſing they can come in competition with each other ; ſecondly, the poſſibility there is of arriving at conviction ; and thirdly, the advantages which are to be expected from it. May the ſolemn truths we have to propoſe ſink ſo deep upon your minds, that you may wiſh, at leaſt,

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to say with the awakened Israelites, "The Lord he is God—the Lord he is God."

First, I am to shew the extreme absurdity of not making a positive choice between atheism and Christianity.

It is surprising how the strength of the passions, joined to a bad education, can make man so different from what one would suppose him to be; if one considered only two of his leading characteristics. So curious by nature, that he seldom so much considers his capacity for comprehending an object, as the desire he has to get acquainted with its properties; so attached to his own interest, that it is with difficulty he is led to make the least sacrifice of it whatever: how is it possible he should so frequently appear neither inquisitive about, or interested in a thing the most worthy

of his understanding, and the most essential to his happiness? How is it possible, that with eyes to see a star or insect, with hands unable to imitate an ant, with faculties to understand the effects produced by the return of the seasons, with a mind incessantly indignant at its imprisonment?—how is it possible, that at five and twenty he should not so much as have heard of a Holy Ghost; or if he has heard of one, if from his infancy he has been dragged unwillingly to exercises he always thought penances, because he never was made acquainted with the design or beauty of them; if the words, a God, a judge, an avenger, or hell, have sometimes struck his ears, with a crowd of other equally forcible inducements to live well, how is it possible he never should have made the inquiry for himself, at the time his ripened faculties freed him from the slavery of living by
other

other people's opinions? Could you think it of no importance, you, who, at too great a distance from the throne, either to assist in, or be hurt by any extension of the prerogative which may happen in your time, esteem it, and justly too, your duty to be acquainted with the nicest limits placed by the constitution between the authority of the king, and that of the people? Could you think it of no importance, you, who from your youth up have accustomed yourself to prevent, as well as to repair, when they have happened in spite of your exactest diligence, the slightest breaches made in your earthly tabernacle? Could you think it of no importance, you, who have sacrificed every other pursuit to the purposes of accumulating riches, which after a short fruition by children and grand-children as transitory as yourselves, will descend to possessors as indifferent to you, as the ancestors

whose portraits only you are acquainted with appear now? Could you think it of no importance to inquire into your origin and your end, whence you came, where you are going to, whether all ended here, whether something farther was to be expected hereafter? Have you never been called to meditate on these things by a preacher, whose records no philosopher can discredit, by a monitor, it is not in the power of the most determined hatred to reflection to pass by without attention? Have you never, as you have seen youth and age, and learning and innocence, and wit and power, all that was lovely, all that was serviceable to mankind, two Sunderlands, two Tavistocks, a Wolfe, a Grey—have you never as you have seen them swept by one promiscuous whirlwind into a common grave, lamented that their virtues had proved so unprofitable to themselves, as well as so useless to a world,

world, who scarce had time to discern the bud, before the tree with all its branches was cut away? Has it never recurred to you in these moments of disquietude and impatience, that there are some who pretend the benefactors of mankind sleep not as they appear to do, but enjoy a pleasing cessation from their labours, together with an infinite recompence for having discharged them; whilst those, on the contrary, who have oppressed their fellow creatures, or forgot the dignity of their nature, are not only denied the melancholy privileges of an eternal sleep, but are forced to expiate the crimes they have committed by undergoing an eternal punishment? Struck with this recollection, have you never reflected on your natural love of pleasure, on your capacity for bearing pain? Has your mind never led you from a survey of the convulsive moments, which distract and tear

the human machine in an agony of the gout or stone, to think on what it must be to be exposed to worse than these tortures united, without a prospect either of cure or relief? Cloyed with pleasure, or dissatisfied with the short interrupted glimmerings it meets with here, has the same mind never dwelt with a presaging fondness on those happy climes where all should be peace, and transport, and perfection? If you never have thought on these things, think of them now, and then answer us if any study can be more important than that which we call upon you to undertake.

Important, you will say, it is, but difficult, but impossible; who shall take the charge of providing my family with bread, while I peruse the volumes, and make myself acquainted with the different opinions that have been maintained about the origin
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of the world? What learned body shall inspire me with their joint endowments, to investigate the gospel's authenticity through all the mazes of geography, and chronology, and learned languages in which it is involved? What angel shall come down from heaven and direct a mind not naturally of the strongest, and which, besides, is used to think modestly of itself, where to fix its choice, amidst contending sects, each of which professes its tenets to be superior to those of all others?—This is a difficulty generally made against the study of religion; but I am surprised that those who make it, cannot see its tendency to introduce a general scepticism and confusion; since, if I am not to submit to government, till I have examined all the objections which may be raised against the particular form established in my country; if I am not to use a common machine, till I
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can prove, upon mechanical principles, it will not produce quite a different effect from what it has always produced, and from what it appears calculated to produce, I may remain in rebellion and inactivity all my life, or only use my reason, to shew me that I had better been without it. But there is something still more positive, since, if we set about the study of religion, with a sincere desire of obtaining conviction, we shall not find the difficulties in it which are commonly alleged. A very little examination will shew us that all others must be false, whatever be the number of books which have been written to defend them, or whatever be the disadvantages their professors labour under in defending their opinion. A very common share of learning will qualify us to understand the original records, and a very common share of candour and attention enable us to find that in them

them which may direct us to choose with certainty, though it does not perhaps qualify us to answer every local or historical question that may be proposed. We shall soon know, for instance, that all who call themselves Christians, agree in the principal point; and that atheists only, endeavour to destroy without pretending to erect. We shall soon see that they bring no new instrument of war against the holy city, but only use those which our fathers have repeatedly shewn them were insufficient to destroy it. Nor must those among you, who have not the advantages of a learned education, think, for that reason, you cannot be religious upon conviction. Dedicate one day in the seven to the service of your Creator; make it a constant rule to come at least on that day within his gates. When you are in his presence be attentive to the familiar but striking

striking proofs of his all-existence and attributes which are read to you from his word ; endeavour afterwards to follow the preacher in the further exposition he gives you of them ; if either at that time, or at any other, you find doubts and difficulties, apply to those who are set over you for the solution of them, and who will answer them themselves, or recommend such treatises upon the subject as are adapted to your capacities. When you are once satisfied that what is important for you to know is easy of comprehension and perfectly consistent with reason, never forget that you have been once satisfied, or let any desire that religion should be an error, much less any argument you cannot comprehend, seduce you from the faith you profess. One among several advantages which you will reap from this practice, will be the being free for ever from the enticements of those
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men, whose arts consist in uttering things unintelligible to their followers, with a degree of passion that melts the heart at the same time that it misleads both it and the understanding.

But there are other advantages to be expected from the study of religion. If you can persuade yourselves there is a God and a future state of retribution for the good, you will abate much of your solicitude for the perishable commodities of this world. Eternity will appear so boundless, and time so small, that you will not think it at all important how you spend years which are drawing to so quick an end; consequently you will be reconciled to the distinctions in society, and easy in whatever station it has pleased God to place you.

Secondly, If you can persuade yourselves
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there is a God and a future state of retribution for the good, you will be convinced nothing can be more important than intitling yourselves to his affection. Hence, you will learn to reject immediately, and as if by instinct, whatever has a tendency to displease him ; and to adopt and follow whatever your reason and his sacred oracles tell you may make you most acceptable in his eyes. But God, these oracles as well as your own reason will tell you, is best pleased with acts of temperance, justice and benevolence, which likewise procure bodily health, peace of mind, and the esteem of those who are witnesses to them ; consequently you will live free from remorse, be respected by those to whom you are known, and have less tendency to contract painful and noisome disorders, than those who are more ignorant than yourselves.

S E R M O N II. 47

Thirdly, If you can persuade yourselves there is a God, it will appear that nothing happens here without his special permission or command. Does the pestilence rage, and sweep away your only child, the sole hope of your nigh-extinguished family—you will discern an angel in the pestilence directing it where to strike. Are you present at the shipwreck of your expected fortunes, when a few hours more would have discharged them at your doors,—you will discern an angel in the wind, commanding the waves to open and to receive their destined treasure: but God, you know, is able to give you greater treasures, and to change your sorrow into joy, by making you a happier father; consequently you will be far more cheerful under your losses than those who see nothing but the ordinary course of nature, or the vicissitudes of an
unruly

unruly element, in accidents of the same kind.

Fourthly, and lastly, Here you are surrounded by malicious, or at best weak and selfish beings, whose interests either inseparably clash with yours, or where rough and ungente manners give the deepest wound to your sensibility. In heaven you will be encompassed by angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, who will augment your enjoyments by their intercourse, and return you all your love. Here you are constantly dissatisfied with what you have done or are doing; constantly mortified by obstacles you had not foreseen; constantly taken off by pursuits you have no relish for: in heaven you will have no occupation but what are congenial to your dispositions, no pleasures but what will be

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as easy to procure, as the possession of them will be fully satisfactory, by leaving you nothing further to desire. Consequently, if you are persuaded that there is a God, and a future state of retribution for the good, you will grow every hour more and more indifferent to the pleasures of this world, and more prepared to resign them when you are called upon by death.

Health, content, resignation, peace of mind, indifference whether we live or die—such are the fruits which hang upon the tree of knowledge. Need I say more then, to incite you to gather them yourselves, and to shew them to your children. You particularly, who hunger and thirst here, that you may fill the highest places at the tables of your heavenly Father hereafter; you who have no other armour to give your little ones, do not deny them the only one

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which will render them invulnerable, but secure them the only victory it is important for them to obtain. Do not allege your circumstances, your lack of friends, the want of having had a religious education, which deprives you of the ability to give it to others. There are hospitable mansions ready to open their doors to those who knock at them; there are representatives of the great master still existing, who make it their business to receive those who come to them in his name. Do but once resolve to put those who belong to you into a situation to get honest bread for themselves, instead of bringing them up to procure yours by ways as disgraceful as they are dangerous and dishonest: have but the spirit to refuse yourselves the scanty pittance which they sometimes extort from our pity, at the expence of our understanding and our justice, and doubt not but you will find protectors
for

S E R M O N II. 51

for them, such protectors as will enable them perhaps to afford you in old age, what you have no right to expect from them before; such at least as will preserve them from being reproaches to their country, whilst they continue children, as well as from falling victims to its offended laws before they have lived out half their days.

And you, who so wantonly approach the laver of baptism, to take engagements upon you which may determine your own fates, as well as the fates of the innocents for whom you take them, reflect a little more seriously than you are wont to do on the importance of your obligations. You bind yourselves in the most solemn manner, and before the most tremendous of all witnesses, that those you answer for shall be brought up virtuously, to lead

Christian and godly lives; that is, that they shall be taught to know the great Being to whom they are indebted for existence and preservation; that they shall be brought acquainted with the happiness that is reserved for them, if they act according to his commandments; with the misery they must be condemned to, if they suffer their own unruly passions to have dominion over them; that at the age in which they become capable of bearing a part in its affairs, they shall be delivered to society with such principles, as may at least not make it unsafe for the community to admit them amongst its members. This you promise in the most solemn manner, and before the most tremendous of all witnesses. If then, either from vanity, interest, or compassion, you take an office upon you, which you feel yourselves unwilling to execute at the very time you take it; if by neglecting, or thinking

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ing lightly of it afterwards, you permit a fellow creature to become vicious and miserable, who, had it not been for your forward and impertinent zeal, might have been innocent and happy—I do not see what atonement you can make to your country ; I do not see what repentance can disarm the anger of your God. What I mean by this, is not to raise unnecessary scruples in the breast of any one, or even to suggest that whilst parents live they are not responsible for their children : all I would suggest is, that as in case of their failure, who by nature are obliged to preserve the knowledge of the true God amongst us, the obligation undoubtedly falls upon those who voluntarily substitute themselves to the original contractors ; it must not be thought an act of common friendship, either to offer or accept a charge of this nature, which on the contrary ought always to be executed by those who have

an interest in executing it with propriety. Nor should they, who are disposed to make every other sacrifice to the welfare of those with whom they are connected, be so averse as they are sometimes found to make this, the most important of them all ; since, if they only consider themselves, they cannot exercise a more honourable employment, or one that is capable of furnishing them with more pleasing sources of reflection and consolation, both now, and when they shall be called away to account for the good they have omitted to do, as well as to bear testimony for themselves of that which they have done.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

PROVERBS, xxviii. 20.

*He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be
innocent.*

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BY SAMUEL JOHNSON

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S E R M O N III.

THE words I have just read, seem more particularly addressed to those who are engaged in any kind of trade or commerce, and they are intended to restrain all such little acts of dishonesty, as, though not cognizable by the law, are nevertheless as contrary to morality, as they are prejudicial to the country in which they are committed. A discourse of this kind would prove uninstruative to the majority, and, it is to be hoped, useless to the whole of this congregation: I have, therefore, chosen to apply the text to a vice, which, too prevalent amongst every order of men, is more particularly fatal to the higher; that
vice,

vice, which robbing birth of its honours, and virtue of its prerogatives, fills the most respectable societies with persons who ought to be banished from the lowest; that vice, which levelling the understanding as much as it does the heart, is equally fatal to the interests of learning and of humanity; that scandalous vice, which spreading itself on all sides, and introducing itself under all disguises, has already weakened some of the strongest ties, and promises every day to dissolve the rest—*the love of play*. May the reflections I have to offer upon it, reflections, neither arising from pedantry, or the affectation of a superiority which it would ill become me to assume, but dictated by the earnest conviction of duty, have the only effect ever attempted by discourses from this place; may they turn your thoughts to the object they arise from, and so prevent your throwing away fortune, character, and
peace

S E R M O N III. 59

peace of mind, before, at least, you have learned the value of them.

It would be mispent time to examine whether avarice is always the chief motive that conducts to the gaming-table in the beginning, or whether it is not ; it is sufficient to justify the choice of words I have made, if play is allowed to be the shortest method by which a large fortune may be gained. I affirm from thence, that he who in this manner makes haste to be rich, shall not be innocent ; he shall not be innocent of the time and talents he mispends ; he shall not be innocent of the sums he risks ; he shall not be innocent of the temptations to dishonesty to which he exposes himself.

And first, He who makes haste to be
rich

rich from play, shall not be innocent of the time and talents he mispends.

To those who are seriously persuaded of the religion they profess, little farther proof of this is necessary. They must know that every instant is allotted, and that all those which cannot be accounted for in some act of public or private utility, will expose them to a diminution of eternal happiness, if not to an increase of eternal misery. These men, therefore, if they are at all consistent, must tremble at the thought of hours which follow hours, and days which succeed to days, without one commendable or praise-worthy action to distinguish them; it may also forcibly strike some who think seriously, even though they should not be persuaded of the great truths of Christianity.

Society,

S E R M O N III. 61

Society, whose security we are equally interested and bound to preserve, could not subsist but on the supposition not only of obedience to its positive laws, but of extraordinary exertions in its favour. The first are duties it has a right to compel the performance of from every one; the last are sacrifices it expects from the generous and disinterested, to repair the breaches which time produces in the noblest edifices, and to make up for the neglect of inferior workmen.

But if all we can do throughout a long life, thus becomes too little either to discharge the debt we owe, or to secure the distinctions we are all, at some time or other, ambitious to obtain; if not only the duties of each particular profession, duties which binding the respective members of them, under a second covenant it is impossible

possible for them to mistake the force of, should make them particularly scrupulous of every temporary forgetfulness of them; not only these, but the common charities of life, are such as require our whole attention; how can we acquit ourselves to ourselves, if we subtract so large a portion of our thoughts and leisure from them, as must be done by those who are devoted to play? What! you who are one day to have a vote in affairs, the least of which may either damage or improve a constitution which religion and liberty have jointly raised to be the envy of the nations round us; and instead of preparing yourselves by study, instead of contrasting the lessons of antiquity with the results of modern experience, instead of accustoming yourselves to think well, speak gracefully and solidly, upon whatever subjects are proposed to your deliberation, you spend the hours of

S E R M O N III. 63

rest in depredations on each other, and those of labour in calculations to ensure them. The treasure of a nation, the lives of its best citizens, perhaps the great aggregate itself, purchased with so much strife, cemented with so much blood, is one day to depend upon your conduct in the field; and instead of searching into what has been done by the saviours of their respective lands; instead of acquainting yourselves with the theory of an art, where courage is but the second qualification towards real praise; instead of dedicating every instant of your leisure to avert, or, if you cannot avert, to diminish the dreadful horrors of a day of battle—your only victories are those of a gaming table, and the only triumphs to which your poor ambition leads you, are those over the avarice and credulity of the unsuspecting. Resolve, then, to give up, with what constitutes

stitutes your title to them, every pretension to such distinctions ; fly to a shameful obscurity before you are forced to fly to it through the resentment of an injured people ; or if you persist in braving them, by this double disregard of their institutions, be not surprised if you are one day awakened by their complaints to a sense of what you owed them and yourselves ; be not surprised, if, unable to reach you, when you sit protected by misguided favour, they make themselves a way to your consciences, through every thing that surrounds you, and force those truths upon you, you will not have from us. Yes, spite of the abuses of that sacred privilege to which we owe what we are, it will continue to subsist amongst us ; and those who any way lose sight of their connections with the public, will continue amenable to its tribunal.

For-

Fortune and honours (young men can never be sufficiently reminded of it), fortune and honours are yours, and they will not easily be taken away ; but esteem, and its fair attendants, the face erect, the tranquil mind, the heart un suspicious and unsuspected, these are ours, and they shall only belong to those who have thought them worth their acquisition.

Nor let it be imagined, that in this case, the love of our country, the esteem and affection of our fellow citizens, are to be regained by after-exertions of patriotisin and benevolence : other passions, indeed, however fatal, however destructive whilst they rage, still leave hopes, that when the storm is past, the bended ear will rise again, and a noble harvest of virtue be produced. Gaming has this dreadful pre-eminence over them all, that once admitted to take possession of the young breast, it is almost al-

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ways

ways admitted into it for life. Like the poet's hell, a thousand avenues conduct to the gloomy caverns, where the desperate adventurer is stripped of every virtue that made the ornament of his nature; but there is scarce one outlet to restore him to the fair face of day.

The reason for it is greatly in that second loss of innocence I have suggested, that arising from the misapplication of fortune. It is commonly said, I know, that this is impossible upon the only rational supposition, that we play with fair players, but that the nature of chance is such, that loss and gain must still succeed each other, if not with the regularity of day and night, yet with no greater vicissitude than that observable in the length of the seasons, the inequalities of which do not prevent the established order of Providence from continuing

S E R M O N III. 67

tinuing equal and unmoved. Those who reason in this manner, the common bait of knaves, the common palliative of fools, do not sufficiently consider, that besides their prostitution of the name of fair player, an article I have much to say upon in the third part of my discourse, the accounts of the gaming-table, and the list of expences formed upon them, are totally different from those of any other revenue whatever.

The old axiom, that what has cost no labour to acquire, is seldom thought worth much pains to preserve, is particularly exemplified in this instance, where the momentary favourite of fortune, big with his own merits, and persuaded that his right hand will never fail to get him the victory, considers the accidental additions to his wealth as so many stated supernumerary additions, which it is lawful to lavish upon the first

flight that presents itself to an imagination naturally and already necessarily unfitted for good things. Hence, gaming is almost always attended with a proportionable extravagance in dress, equipage, and every other luxurious article of expence: hence too, losses after losses, and wastes after wastes, make that which was at first an amusement, and then a pleasing, though infamous occupation, a dire necessity; hence, our own stewards, and those of our friends, are tired out, in finding supplies not only appropriated, but often dissipated before they are raised; hence extortioners, usurers, and all the remorseless family of fraud, are obliged to be called in, to the support of an imaginary honour; hence ruin, but of what complexion, good Heaven, of what bulk! Not our own only; not that of an unspotted name, distinguished only for fair pursuits, till we exposed it to be confounded with

with that of sharper, of villain; but that of a wife, whom we once made it our pride and pleasure to have distinguished by all the delicacies of her sex, and who now sees herself obliged to exchange them for the extremes of wretchedness and dependance—but that of children condemned to dishonour before their birth, and robbed of their patrimony by their protector; and *this*, with what might have made our whole life little more than one continued scene of agreeable sensations; and *this*, with what would have made our abodes in the capital the temples of virtue and merit, and our summer retreats, the nurseries of every art, and of every accomplishment; and *this*, with what had been entrusted to us by the just Being, who established the distinctions that prevail in society for purposes of mercy and benevolence. No, surely, he who every way makes himself poor, by thus making haste

to be rich, shall not be innocent of what he risks with a view to success.

Wife, children, artists, peasants, indigent merit, virtue in obscurity, all these are obligations indeed; and he must be inaccessible to every generous, as well as every tender call of his nature, who remains unmoved by them: but still it may be said they are obligations of the second order, and the difficulty of fixing the proper bounds may make indelicate minds unconscious of their extent. It is necessary, therefore, to awaken such by shewing them that gaming strikes at the very essence of society, and immediately loosens the bands for the cementing of which it was instituted. This I shall therefore do in the last place, by endeavouring to prove, that he who makes haste to be rich, shall not be innocent of the temptations to dishonesty he incurs,

incurs. But what do I say of the temptations to dishonesty ! I affirm that he shall be dishonest. Yes, my brethren, I do not pretend to determine the precise time, when, instead of a secret repugnance to sit down with an unequal adversary, for a trifling sum at a game of skill, he will rejoice, he will hunt for the opportunity of playing a game of chance with the unskilful, for more than ever they both possessed; nor when he will begin to think it as honourable as it is expedient to prepare himself for the combat, by the same abstemiousness that was practised by the sportive men-killers of antiquity ; nor when he will go a step farther, and substitute the little stratagems of bush-fighting to the confidence of open war ; nor when he will call in all the powers of hell to assist him in his midnight conjurations ; this I will not, this I cannot determine, for there will be many conflicts,

many struggles between honour and dishonour, many temporary returns to virtue ; this I will not therefore pretend to determine ; but this I again affirm, and call heaven and earth to witness the truth of my asseverations, that gaming, when not prevented by ruin, as assuredly concludes in cheating, and the dupe in the knave, as frequent drinking in drunkenness, and the lust of the eye in adultery. How can it possibly be otherwise? What! when self-love and self-interest have been repeatedly provoked by repeated humiliations and distresses ; when a single stroke is to fill the measure of them, by ruining us for ever ; when the facility of preventing it is as obvious as the necessity of it appears great ; and when all the tender, and all the tumultuous passions beating together at the heart, afford us only the sight of our situation, without any of the requisites to support it ;
who

S E R M O N III. 73

who then shall be cool and temperate at once, who is hardy enough to declare he will persist in his integrity amidst so great a temptation to break through it! Alas! if the experience of all ages has proved it so difficult to persist in it, whilst there is but a slight advantage in the opposite balance, what man who knows himself, can flatter himself that he will resist, when it is almost virtue to be overcome? But this, you will say, is an extreme case; it is indeed an extreme case, but it may be the case of all those who venture to entertain a fiend, that will not leave them till it has led them to that precipice, down which it has already tumbled so many; it may be the extreme case of all who worship a divinity that knows no middle homage, and only acknowledges two orders of votaries, the plunderers, and the plundered. And if it was not so; if we could count as many persons

persons half-ruined by play, as we can by the other fashionable vices, still would not this half-destruction have been effected, but with the total wreck of the more inestimable jewels. I appeal to the very arts I have enumerated above; arts which every man, who has lived at all in the world, knows are without scruple exercised by those who maintain the fairest reputations in it, and which are sufficient to shew, how little either David's truth in the inward parts, or the dove-like simple academic virtue, are consistent with the occupation of a gamester. But thus you shall not be innocent, any more than the unjust steward, who pleads your inattention, and the necessities the example of your luxury has brought on him, to defraud you; any more than the household or civil traitor, who gets himself lands or habitation by the abuse of your ill-reposed confidence; any
more

more than any man, who, knowing of what he is made, and by what rule he is to conduct himself, rejudges the decisions of superior prudence at his own tribunal, and exposes himself to hazards to which he is assured before-hand he will fall a victim.

To conclude ; Thus I have endeavoured to lay before you, I hope not with an indecent, I am sure (if the representations of either the comic or tragic scenes are to be believed) not with an overcharged pencil, the fatal, but too probable, and every day beheld effects of play.

If there are any persons who are more particularly to be cautioned against being seduced by its allurements, it is to those I direct my discourse, to those who, after having received the best education the best of countries is able to afford them, travel in-

to foreign parts for the several supposed purposes of completing it; to those, whose ages do not oblige them to take refuge from satiety, in an amusement which almost always becomes criminal the instant it ceases to be insipid; to those who have as yet a variety of untried tastes to gratify, a variety of untried pleasures to explore, and no temptations from circumstances, the gamester's first, but only palliative to lead them on. Pity itself can suggest no apology for them, if once admonished they suffer themselves to be betrayed into destruction. Let us hope then that you will think better things, and, instead of adding a fresh tale of dishonour to the number that have been circulated already, contribute to wipe off the reproach, that it is to the idleness of our younger travellers that this vice, as well as some others, owe their late alarming progress amongst us. Idleness, at all times

a disgraceful excuse, at all times the equal scandal to the understanding which dictates, and the heart which adopts it, is doubly so in the circumstances in which you find yourselves. Where so much is to be seen, so much observed, so much learned, it is impossible but that every mind, except such as are already unfit and unworthy of improvement, should meet with something to occupy it, without disgust. If you will not, or cannot, or want the opportunity to form connections where the access indeed is difficult, though not so much so as the fastidiousness of early independence makes it; but where the advantages compensate for the toil requisite to procure them—if you have not curiosity enough to wish to pick up what may be collected of the religion, constitution, manners and customs of a great people, in the public meetings open to every one; if you have

have no diversion in the contemplation of the beauties of art, and those of nature, which are assembled with profusion in this capital; though without any of them it is difficult to conceive how any man can forget the comforts and conveniences he has left behind him; still there are two resources, which cannot be wanting to any of you, the exercises, too often no less neglected than the internal culture; and the society of respectable countrymen, always to be met with amongst the numbers whom health, business, or pleasure, annually incite to abandon their native land. To these repair, with these live, of these learn; not with those, who, banished from their country for crimes, seek to revenge themselves, by corrupting the hearts, as well as by preying on the fortunes, of its younger citizens.

Lastly:

S E R M O N III. 79

Laſtly : From ſuch connections, as your prudence may inſpire, learn the extent of the debt you owe to yourſelves and to your country, and the moſt honourable methods of diſcharging it ; always remembering, that however long or ſhort, however pleaſant or otherwiſe, the time of our pilgrimage here may turn out, the end of all muſt be, that we appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt.

S E R M O N IV.

MARK vi. 26.

The king was exceeding sorry, yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which were with him, he would not reject her.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N

I must be owned, the whole of the
the air of a sermon, but the
MARK 12: 25
between Herod and His daughter. He knew
the daughter of Herod was a very
beautiful woman, and for the sake of the
king, he gave her what she desired. John
the Baptist, who was a very good man,
and on this very account, and had
him once already been imprisoned to
save his life. I might be too far from
referred that in some cases, a woman
new her husband, and he was
at length, the second time, he was
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S E R M O N IV.

IT must be owned, the whole affair has the air of a concerted scheme between Herod and Herodias. He knew her malicious and revengeful temper, and was acquainted with the provocation she had received; nay, he had thrown John into prison on this very account, and had more than once already been importuned to take away his life. Ought he not to have expected that so abandoned a woman would renew her solicitations? ought he not to have foreseen she would attack him in a loose and unguarded hour? and when in opposition to every received opinion of fe-

male delicacy, he beheld her daughter enter the banquet room, ought he not immediately to have seen through the shallow artifice, and to have become particularly careful of every expression that fell from him? Instead of this, he suffers Salome to bring dishonour upon his house by dancing before his captains, and is hurried into such an indecent transport at the performance, that he offers her half his kingdom as the reward. She retires to consult her mother; still Herod is without suspicion; she returns, and asks for the head of John the Baptist. Then, indeed, the king is alarmed; he puts on the appearance of a man of honour, who has been made the dupe of his own generosity; he seems to regret having engaged so deep. But does he make a single effort to recover himself? Say that he had already tried the force of every divine and human consideration with
his

S E R M O N IV. 85

his Herodias, and that he had found her heart steeled against them all; might he not have promised himself better success with the girl? It is very possible she acted entirely in obedience to her mother, and might not even know she was committing murder; why not then, at least, attempt to make her change her request? Why not refer it to a more candid and dispassionate examination? Why not send for the high priests and interpreters of the law, to know of them how far an unjust oath was obligatory upon the person who had been deceived into it? Why immediately order the head to be given to her?

On the other hand, suppose it to have been a collusion (and nothing is more easily accounted for than the seeming absurd precipitation with which it was hurried through), Herod must have hated John at

this time, whatever good dispositions towards him he might have had previous to his marriage; what we know of his character will not let us think he could persist in his crime, and yet have generosity enough to forgive the prophet who had been bold enough to reproach him with it. John, however, was a favourite with the people; perhaps the very reason which had rendered Herod so averse to him, had contributed to make him so. The vulgar are the same in all ages; and though sometimes, perhaps, they happen to place their esteem right enough, at the same time they do not so much give it to real sanctity of manners, and integrity of life, as to the boldness a reformer uses in censuring the vices of his superiors. Whatever were their motives for granting it in the present case, certain it is they were much attached to the prisoner, and threatened an insurrection whenever he should

S E R M O N IV. 87

be executed. What more likely to turn the edge of their resentment, than making them believe that Herod himself had been circumvented in the affair? that he was surpris'd unawares at the end of a feast, when he was not cool enough to determine with precision on what was propos'd to him; nay, not only that his good faith, but that his religion had been surpris'd, and that he had been driven to the hard necessity of choos'ing between two sore evils?

But though, upon weighing the several circumstances, I should be inclin'd to be of the first opinion, the most respectable authorities have decid'd it in favour of another. Let us, then, suppose Herod to have been an extremely weak, rather than an extremely wicked man; let us believe, that though already stain'd with in-

38 S E R M O N IV.

cest and adultery, he had virtue enough left to start at the first proposal to commit murder, and examine farther by what steps he was led into it.

The subject naturally divides itself into reflections on the motives and effects of Herod's sorrow, and into considerations of the two reasons assigned for its proving ineffectual. To each of these I shall subjoin such hints as may bring the example home to ourselves.

Herod was sorry, at what? That he had given his whole court such an instance of his incapacity to govern? that deaf, no doubt as they had often seen him, to the plea of indigent merit, he had offered, for the licentious entertainment of half an hour, what would have been thought an extravagant recompense, if given to the states-

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man who had extended, or the soldier who had saved his empire? that if he had enemies amongst his guests, the story might be told at Rome to his disadvantage, and draw some mark of the emperor's displeasure on him? These would have been sufficient motives of sorrow, but there were others still stronger. To be esteemed is the awful privilege of virtue, the tribute which every man must pay, however unwilling he is to serve under the sovereign's virtue to whom it belongs. John's was of so exalted a nature, as had made it impossible to refuse it him. The king had sent him to prison, but could not so easily get rid of the impression his conversation had made on him. Though he had not fortitude enough to practise temperance and justice himself, he could not help seeing both their pleasantness and utility; he could not help feeling they were treasures to the individual

dual who possessed them, and absolutely necessary to the well-being of society, which could not even exist without them. Was it possible not to hesitate at condemning him, whose only guilt had been that of recommending temperance and justice, a guilt which most probably too he shared with many others? Abandoned as the Jews were, incest and adultery were crimes of too black a nature to pass uncensured by them. Who could assure Herod another prophet was not ready to rise from John's grave, and that once seduced, he would not every day be engaged in a barbarous sacrifice to his wife's reputation? Finding himself nearly in the same circumstances, could he fail of recollecting his father's history, what a series of misfortunes a woman's passions had introduced into his house; what agonies he had lived under from the time of his having shed innocent blood; what a general

ral opinion had prevailed, that God's hand had been visible in the dreadful circumstances of his death? Unhappy Herod! and couldst thou have ears for such a voice, and yet not profit by the lessons which it gave thee? Which of us but would have turned aside upon seeing such a precipice in the road he was to tread? Which of us, but, full of gratitude to the Providence who had at last suffered Herodias to shew herself without disguise, would have dismissed her with contempt? Which of us, but would have sent for the holy man to his court, and, as to a second Daniel, have given him the direction of our counsel and ourselves? Which?—Would it have been he who looks indeed with a wistful and repining eye on the fair path he has forsaken, but has not resolution enough to think of returning to it? He who is barely sorry he has it not in his power to quit a connection which has
already

already affected his fortune, and threatens both his reputation and his life? He who, more than past the meridian of life, takes pains to persuade others, and make himself believe, he is the slave of constitution and victim of bad example? He who has more than once experienced how dangerous to goodness is the frequent neglect of public worship, yet still listens to every paltry avocation, every trifling indisposition, every excuse that weather or convenience suggests to detain him from it?

Now these breaches of the law are not all of equal consequence in themselves; but, alas! it is with crimes as it is with virtues, they have so strict and necessary a partnership with each other, that it requires not only a very feeling heart, but a very nice eye to distinguish those you give admission to. The Athenian legislator has been deservedly

servedly censured for making death alike
 the punishment of him who wantonly beat
 down an apple tree, and of him who
 murdered a man. But though I do not
 pretend to vindicate him, I cannot help
 thinking the motive of his law has been
 mistaken, and that it did not so much arise
 from a native cruelty of disposition, as from
 a want of judgment. No doubt he had
 seen many particular instances of the pro-
 pensity men have to grow worse, and was
 induced to draw too general a conclusion
 from them. In judging him, we must re-
 member he was a heathen, and of course
 unacquainted with the religion whose pro-
 perty it is to correct the passions, and re-
 press the mischiefs they naturally bring on.
 What then I would recommend from this
 part of Herod's history, is to be particular-
 ly attentive in keeping up what may be cal-
 led a delicacy of conscience : otherwise, his
 case

case may some day or other become our own. We may soon grow deaf to, and afterwards be entirely deserted by the heavenly monitor. The first happened to Herod in the present instance; he had remorse enough to know he was engaging in an unwarrantable action, but not enough to save him from committing it.

And here we should be apt to wonder how so thin a subterfuge as the first he made use of could have imposed upon him, if we had not too often opportunities of observing the progress of vice. When first a man forgets his duty, passion, willing at any rate to make a proselyte of him, furnishes him with a rich variety of plausible excuses, and he has nothing to do but to choose that which is most adapted to his temper, constitution or circumstances; in proportion as he advances he finds a necessity,

fity, or rather a convenience in becoming less delicate in his choice of expedients to satisfy himself, till at last he is obliged to take up with the coarsest and most unwholesome fare, such as takes off his hungry cravings for the present instant, only to increase them the instant after. If it was not so, could we ever have been told that Herod consented "for his oath's sake?" How readest thou, Herod? hath not he who said, "Thou shalt not take my name in vain," said also, "Thou shalt do no murder?" Can there be a more solemn mockery of the Almighty, than to make amends for the forgetfulness of one command, by the premeditated transgression of another? Had oaths been insufficient to protect thy brother Philip from suffering the greatest of wrongs from thee, and were they now to be remembered only to sanctify

tify oppression? But say, that oaths could indeed bind the man whom neither the ties of blood, nor the fear of merited infamy, nor the positive declarations of an avenging God could restrain, were there not other oaths as sacred as this cruel, as this unguarded one? Hadst thou not sworn to do judgment and justice, to be the father of the fatherless, and of him that had none to help him; to punish the blood-thirsty and deceitful person? Vain and paltry evasions of a shuffling, but too conscious heart, stand if you can the searching eye of time; protect Herod, if you are able, when he shall see the holy head he has demanded; enable him to bear with patience the sentence already pronounced upon him; comfort him when the partner of his crimes shall have become the instrument God makes use of to punish them; support

him when he shall have lost the crown he has abused, and is become a perpetual exile from the land he has polluted.

There are two mistakes pretty generally run into with regard to oaths; the first consists in thinking we cannot be bound at all without this sanction, the other in imagining it can supersede moral obligations. As to the first, we should remember, that if God has permitted us to make use of his holy name, and, as it were, to make a personal witness of him in our cause, he did it on account of the hardness of our hearts, not to furnish us with an occasion to deceive our fellow-creatures, but to give them as much security as possible against our natural propensity to do so. Considered in this light, an oath is an ignominious badge, a mask of slavery which every man carries about him, to

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let those who have any dealings with him know that his passions are his masters, and that he is not to be treated with as a free agent. Far, therefore, from giving occasion to suspect we want this security to engage us, we should behave in such a manner as to have it thought whenever a testimony upon oath is required from us, that the nicety of the law, and not the frailty of the man, requires this precaution. We should recollect that God wants not the solemnity of human forms, to make him ever present, and ever attentive, and be persuaded, that a plain promise has no sooner escaped our lips, than it is registered in the book of heaven, one day to be produced in evidence of acquittal or condemnation. No doubt, had Herod only promised, he would have been as strictly bound to perform what depended upon himself alone, though it had been ever so much

much against his own interest; farther he could not go, nor can we. It is unlawful for a man who has great and acknowledged abilities, to plead he is restrained by oath from engaging in his country's service; it is sacrilege to think of gaining heaven by appropriating sums of money to charitable uses, whilst there is a fellow creature upon earth who has a legal demand to make on us. It is as contrary to religion as to humanity, to pretend we should have been willing to be reconciled to those who have offended against us, were it not that we have sworn never to forgive them. Leave thy sacrifice upon the altar—if, like Herod, thou hast brought thyself into such a dilemma as not to be assured of ever being able to return and offer it, at thy own peril let it be—but leave thy sacrifice upon the altar, and be reconciled to thy brother: I tell thee thou shalt be beaten with fewer

stripes, than *he* who seeks to persuade mankind it is his heavenly Father who forbids him to be merciful.

But reduced as the Tetrarch was to content himself with the most trifling argument passion could offer, he would not so easily have been led away by it, if those who sat at table with him had not joined to give it strength. The first striking observation in this part of his story is, that Herod had not a single friend in the whole assembly. Had there been one, we should have heard of his having arisen to protect the innocent; we should have been told of his having endeavoured, perhaps at the expence of his own life, to undeceive the mistaken monarch. The name of the generous personage would have been recorded for the admiration of posterity, and the example of future ministers. We hear of none; sel-

dom as they are to be met with in the palaces of princes, they are still feldomer the companions of their pleasures. Too constantly engaged in promoting the welfare of the people entrusted to them, either to have time or relish for vulgar amusements, they particularly avoid mixing in those scenes where they can only meet occasions of weeping over the weakneses which may render all their labours ineffectual. Besides this, can it be imagined that any man of probity or religion would have been continued in Herod's service? Why does your young friend come so feldom to the house where he used to give, and seemed to receive so much pleasure? Herodias has forbidden him. Why is he never to be met with but in the disgraceful company of wretches, who are at once a blot to his honour, and a reproach to his understanding? They are the favourites of his Herodias.

Alas ! it is the baleful property of vice, not only to connect us with the bad, but to disqualify us for the company of the good. As long as we have any feeling left, we cannot help considering every good man we meet with, as the avowed patron of the virtue which distinguishes him ; we cannot help seeing ourselves in the light of personal enemies to, and secret offenders against him. We have no relish for caresses we are conscious of not having deserved ; no answer to effusions we feel ourselves unworthy of ; no place in the heart for sentiments so different from those we have given it up to ; we haste to fly from the awful presence we cannot bear ; we endeavour to forget its reproaches in the banquet. Whom meet we there ? Whom is it probable Herod met with there ? Who were those for whose sake he is said to have consented ? Many of them, it is probable, had

had been drawn together, from no other motive than that of partaking of the entertainment which had been prepared; provided that could have gone on, it would have been matter of perfect indifference to them whether John, or Herodias, or the daughter, or Herod himself had been beheaded. But, as whoever interrupted their mirth was their enemy of course, they voted for John's death, not because they thought it either just or expedient, but because it was the quickest way of bringing his cause to a decision. Others again, we may reasonably suppose, were the creatures of Herodias, equally prepared for supporting any extravagant request she should have made. Others, perhaps, had projects of ambition to serve, and might have formed hopes on the insurrection which was apprehended. The majority, no doubt, were John's enemies upon principle; they could not bear

what they treated as an affectation of singularity so opposite to the spirit of the times ; they could not forgive a man whose temperance seemed a constant satire on their excesses ; a man, whom once or twice they had gone to hear out of curiosity, and who had so clearly proved the necessity of repentance, that though he had not succeeded in turning them from their sins, he had destroyed the pleasure they took in them. What would a modern prince have heard on a similar occasion ! What encouragement must not Herod have met with from such guests ! How often must he have been reminded, that the fate of a friendless and unprotected Jew was not of consequence enough to interrupt a prince's pleasures ! How often must he have been warned against suffering a foolish principle of pity to get the better of his honour ! Could he oppose scruples to a wife who
had

had got over so many for his sake? Could he talk seriously of an insurrection, when his friends were ready to protect him? Could he think of futurity, when the Sadducees so clearly proved that soul and body died together?

Herod consented for the sake of those who sat at meat with him; encouraged by, or afraid of appearing contemptible before them. This, of all the lessons he gives us, ought to sink the deepest on our minds. Though we boast ever so much of our independence, there is not a truth more certain, than that almost every man we meet with, has an influence upon our conduct. Inquire of the bankrupt, whom ye have seen ruined, what first led him into the extravagancies which have brought beggary upon his family, and captivity on himself; he will tell you it was those who
 sat

fat at meat with him: he did not want either industry or honesty, but could not bear to be outdone by those who had no other merit than ten times the income he possessed: hence it was that vanity took the place at his entertainments, instead of hospitality; that ostentation, and not utility regulated the number of his equipages and domestics; that he engaged in diversions for which he had no taste; that he joined in enterprises for which he had no talents; that he neglected friends who would have served him, and substituted acquaintance who then helped to ruin, and now join in laughing at and despising him. What makes so many of us tame when our friend's character is reflected upon, and so outrageous when the least ambiguous hint is thrown out against our own? Why do we join in the illiberal jest, or content ourselves with sitting silent, when modesty meets with insults, and merit with disdain?

S E R M O N IV. 107

Why particularly can the enemies of the gospel boast so much of their victories in conversation, after having been repeatedly defeated from the press? Is it not because we fear the authority, or are willing to secure the protection of those who sit at meat with us?

Cowards then, as we must own ourselves to be, let us not appear imprudent too by venturing rashly into dangers we can avoid. Thank Heaven there are still banquets where John has protectors, there are societies where it is no crime to appear his friends. Let us once for all, then, take the resolution of never joining in any other, instead of wantonly exposing ourselves to insults we do not deserve, and to temptations we cannot always promise to resist.

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7——12.

*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or
whither shall I flee from thy presence? If
I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I
make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If
I take the wings of the morning, and dwell
in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there
shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand
shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness
shall cover me; even the night shall be light
about me: Yea, the darkness hideth not from
thee; but the night shineth as the day.*

J. E. R. M. O. N.

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S E R M O N V.

WHOEVER has considered the magnificent description of the first promulgation of the law, contained in the xix. and xx. chapters of Exodus, will have been struck with a fresh degree of astonishment, at the repeated rebellions of the Jewish people. What preacher had ever more right to expect his doctrines would sink deep, and make durable impressions upon his hearers, than he who was able to attest the immediate presence of the Divinity to their veracity and importance? What preacher had ever greater reason to expect his admonitions had had the effect

at

at which he aimed, than he who no sooner had opened his mouth, but a whole people answered him together, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do?"

Alas! is not this rather a fresh instance of our proneness to measure our neighbour's defect with one measure, and our own with another? What though no thick cloud has rolled round the sanctuary, when the wisdom of the legislative power hath so often gathered you together—what though neither trumpets of more than human sound, nor the noise of mighty thunderings, nor the convulsive movements of the earth on which you were standing, have ever directed your eyes to the glory which rested round you—what though amidst other awful signals of conspiring nature, your ears have never been struck by the awful sounds of that voice, that
made

made the affrighted Israelites implore that Moses might henceforward be suffered to address them, lest the terrors of Omnipotence should prove too powerful for their senses; still it is certain, that you have met under the inspection of the Divinity; that he has seen your dispositions; that he has heard your resolutions; that he has estimated the weight of the promises which you made him: what do I say? not only this, but he has followed you from hence into the places where the resolutions you had taken here were to have their effect; he has been at hand to judge whether you discharged the whole of what you had vowed; not only thus, but he has read if the heart went along with the expressions of the tongue, or contented itself with a cool acquiescence in the dictates of the understanding.

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114 S E R M O N V.

It is this noblest and most incommunicable of all the divine perfections; this first attribute that connects the inhabitants of earth with heaven, this primary source of humility and repentance, and confidence, and love, and every other Christian virtue, which, in consequence of a former engagement, I this day purpose to consider. And if ever subject deserved you should forget all lesser cares, to give it your whole attention; if ever it was to be wished that some part of what was to be said, might be carried away and remembered by those who heard it; now is that appointed time, now is that day of salvation. To day, to day especially, to day, if ever hereafter you mean to hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

I shall follow my usual method; first, to lay before you the proof and nature of
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S E R M O N V. 115

the attribute ; secondly, to press the inferences which arise from it.

God knows every thing ; God directs every thing ; God refers every thing to ends which he pre-ordained : three leading ideas which constitute and prove the doctrine of Omnipresence, and which it will be part of my present business to lay before you.

First, then, I am to prove that God knows every thing : To do this, it will only be necessary to consider him in the light of an artist who has made an immense machine, and contrived it in such a manner as that it should continue to subsist. There can be little doubt, I think, but we should readily allow an artist of this kind to be acquainted with the properties of his own work, to know how much force the single wheels he had contrived would exert,

either at the time they were in their full force, or when attrition would have impeded their powers; what mechanical advantages they would gain by acting in conjunction with each other; what damages they would suffer from the violences of external bodies; how long each separate piece would retain its original vigour; when it might be expected that the whole would be destroyed.

The world is a machine of this nature; the allowed work of an architect; and, *as far as we hitherto know of him*, the allowed work of an architect full of great ideas, exquisite sagacity, and regular design. Nothing, therefore, can be more rational than to allow he thoroughly understands what he was able to contrive. Matter and motion are the two great hinges which turn all the movements of this nether world; he
must,

must, therefore, have been perfectly well acquainted with all the effects they could produce ; he must have known that a certain quantity of the one, joined to a certain quantity of the other, would in the one case produce water, in the other fire, in the third air, in the fourth earth ; he must have foreseen that the mixtures of the primitive elements with each other, would occasion shipwrecks and earthquakes, and the ravages of fire ; he must have foreseen the times and seasons, when each of these should rage with its utmost violence, or yield to the consuming fury of the other ; he must have foreseen the fatal period when they, when the times and seasons themselves should be no more, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. To believe him ignorant of this, is to

believe this earth, which he had made so beautiful for himself, might have been destroyed the instant after it was finished ; to confess he knows it, is to allow him essentially present at each of these operations.

In the same manner as he created man, and made him what he is, he foresaw what in time he would become ; he saw his abuses of understanding, of liberty, and of all the glorious faculties, which there is one who enjoys, without the shadow of change ; he foresaw misfortunes, the parents of fresh crimes, and crimes the parents of fresh misfortunes ; he foresaw contending passions struggling with each other for temporary domination, and yielding for an instant to the authority of reason, or the dear bought lessons of experience, that they might return with greater impetuosity the instant after, and triumph more shamefully still,

still, over both our reason and experience. He foresaw this ; and if he did not see it, that is, if he were not in such a manner present to every act and thought, as that they should have no greater energy than is consistent with his views, then man too might rise in opposition to the general harmony which prevails, and, as far as his diminutive faculties would let him, introduce disorder and confusion.

But you will ask, perhaps, how it is, that all which exists can be at one and the same instant subjected to the eyes of the Divinity; by what kind of energy does he fill the immensity of space allotted to his stupendous works ; by what manner of vivifying power does he pervade the whole machine, so as to be immediately present at the least, as well as at the greatest of its movements ? This is a question, which, if indeed we could

take the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea; which, if indeed we could ascend up into heaven, or make our bed in hell, we should be obliged to confess ourselves unable to resolve. Nothing less than he who made all nature, can discover how all nature is present to him. We who are infinitely little, and can see infinitely little, can only expect to make conjectures, more or less likely to be true, as we keep more in mind God's dignity, and our own abasement. Thus, for instance, we know that when man attempts to fix his thoughts upon a subject, his brain must be put in agitation, his spirits must be inflamed, his senses must conspire with his mind. But the brain tires, the spirits grow languid, the smallest alteration in the state of the body takes away from the vigour of the understanding. A being whose nature is not made up of any of these material
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substances, is not affected by any of the accidents which befall them. Again, man owes his existence to an extraneous cause, to a cause which has limited the number of his ideas: God is the cause of every thing, his ideas are the models from whence every thing has been taken, and he need only be acquainted with himself, to know the nature of the source, and consequently that of all the rivers which have flowed from it.

But as this is a subject, which, after all our researches, we must still own ourselves unable to understand, it will be more useful to proceed to the second purposed article of inquiry, and strive to learn in what manner God's omnipresence is manifested upon earth. And this cannot be done in a better way, than by laying before you the testimonies of the scriptures, as they speak exactly

exactly the language of reason, and are contained in more beautiful and energetic words than any we can invent.

Thus, for instance, does a new creation take place, or are a fresh race of beings called into existence to supply the vacancies of those who went before them: we are told that it is in God they live and move, and have their being. His eyes saw their substance when it was yet imperfect; all their members were written in his book, when as yet there were none of them; his hands clothed them with skin and flesh, and fenced them with bones and sinews.

If, again, they are saved from the dangers which surround them on all sides, and continue unmolested partakers of the primary blessings of nature, it is the Almighty who preserves both man and beast; what he gives

S E R M O N V. 123

gives them, that they gather; when he opens his hand, they are filled with good; but when he hides his face, they are troubled; when he takes away their breath, they die, and return to dust.

If the found of armed men is heard within our walls; if the pestilence walks by noon-day through our city; if thousands, and ten thousands are faint for want of nourishment in our street:—it is he who has lifted up his ensign to the nations from far, and made them come with speed swiftly; it is he who has made our heaven as iron, and our earth as brass; it is he who has cursed the basket and the store, the fruit of the body, and the fruit of the land, the increase of our kine, and the flocks of our sheep. Does every thing, on the contrary, turn out according to our wishes: it is God who built the house, and smiled upon the labours

labours of the workman. Is our understanding improved? it is God who gave us the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Are our virtues enlarged? it is he who worketh in us both to will and to do; who giveth his wisdom, and refuses it to none of those who lack and ask him for it. The most important of our concerns, the issues of life and death are at his disposal, and he interests himself in the most ordinary ones, so that not a hair of the head falls to the ground without his divine permission.

But at the time that God thus unites himself to every thing; at the time that he thus inspects, that he thus looks through every thing; he does it with the fixed design of making every thing subservient to himself. This is the third and last idea of immensity and omnipresence: God is present

present at every thing, because he directs every thing to his own ends.

When he produces a fresh creation, or causes a new race of beings to succeed those who have fulfilled their appointed time, it is to afford a fresh manifestation of his goodness and power ; it is to have new subjects, and new children, on whom he may confer new obligations ; it is to retire, as it were, for a moment out of himself, and the unmixed contemplation of his own pure essence, to behold the work which he pronounced good from the beginning ; it is to hear the heavens declare his glory, and see the firmament shew forth his handy-work. When he employs himself in acts of preservation, it is to make the creatures whom he preserves, correspond in his designs ; designs, which it is impossible we should understand the magnificence of now,
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but which, when we do understand, we shall be as much struck with, as with what we know.

When he sends upon us cursing, vexation and rebuke in all that we set our hands to do; it is to make the princes of the earth learn wisdom; it is to make those sensible to his justice, who have been insensible to his goodness; it is to take just vengeance on a guilty people, in the midst of their forgetfulness of the laws taught them by the religion of nature; for their contempt of that which has been revealed; for their obstinate defiance of the terrors which Moses and the prophets had foretold.

Does he, on the contrary, send peace within our gates, and plenteousness within our palaces; does he at last crown us with all the blessings of life; do our sheep bring forth

S E R M O N V. 127

thousands in our streets; are our children like olive branches round our table:—it is to draw us towards him with cords of love; it is to make himself known to us by that universal charity which constitutes his essence; it is to make us imitators of him, who never left himself without a witness, by doing good.

Such are the notions you are to form of God's immensity; such is the manner in which he is immediately present to every thing that exists; such is the sense in which Solomon, in his dedication prayer, supposes that he will leave that heaven of heavens which cannot contain him, to be present in the house which he had builded.

This it was especially, that possessed the soul of the first of poets, what time he broke forth into the sublime song I have been

been endeavouring to explain. "O Lord,
"thou hast searched me and known me,
"thou knowest my down sitting, and my
"up rising; thou understandest my thought
"afar off; thou compassest my path, and
"art acquainted with all my ways; thou
"hast beset me behind and before, and
"there is not a word on my tongue, but
"thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether."

Whither shall I fly then from thy spirit,
or whither then shall I go from thy pre-
sence? Many other inferences might be
drawn from this extensive text, but I
chose to confine myself to this; each of the
others will find its place among the attri-
butes which still remain to be explained.
How shall we escape, if we neglect so great
a salvation? how shall we escape, if, whilst
all nature is actuated by the presence of
her God, and strives to make him some
return,

return, we alone either sit idle, or do such acts, as infinite purity must not behold without resentment? Since that we should escape, is more impossible than it would be for us to take the wings of the morning, and fly into the uttermost parts of the sea, nothing remains, but that the thought of Omnipresence make us think seriously how we may meet our God, since it takes away from us all prospect of avoiding him.

We are but too apt to be long and confused in our exhortations from this place; we are but too apt to refine and enlarge upon the precepts of morality we deliver, in such a manner, that you either lose sight of the main duty, or are disheartened by the numerous consequences which flow from it. On the present occasion, you have nothing of this kind to apprehend. The intent, the sense, the sum, the result of all

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that has been said, may be comprised in three words, and is briefly this : Never forget that God is near you ; think of him, as you would think of him if, clothed in a human shape, invested with human organs, and armed with those lightnings, with which Scripture represents him ready to transfix the bad, he was incessantly within your sight, prepared to leave you a dreadful monument of his wrath, the instant you departed from his commandments. Oppose this universal preservative to injustice ; oppose it to lust, to avarice, and to ambition ; oppose it to the temptation of giving up sacred engagements, and domestic obligations, to the calls of pleasures ; oppose it to the pleasure which would unfit for sacred engagements, and the conscientious discharge of domestic obligations. Bind it as a sign upon your hands, and a frontlet between your eyes ; use it as a lamp to
your

S E R M O N V. 131

your feet, and a light to your paths; embrace it as shield, which cannot be for a moment laid aside, without exposing you to a mortal wound; cherish it as the balm that is to medicate every sorrow but the last; preserve it as the guide, whose ever ready, ever benignant influence, will dispel even the agonies of the last hour, and conduct you, without a struggle, to the real presence of your Maker. To whom, with all tongues, nations and languages, let us ascribe, as is most due, all, &c.

S E R M O N VI.

PSALM xvi. 9.

*I have set God always before me ; for he is
on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
I have been thinking of the
phenomenon and the
come than that which is
we say the passage where
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ten by David with his
as the prophet says
the immediate perception
that the people
might be able to
than well with him
be restored to health
and were able

S E R M O N VI.

THE Psalm from which these words have been taken, is evidently prophetic, and can be understood in no other sense than that which St. Peter has given to it, in the passage where he applies it to our Saviour, and declares it to have been written by David with that design. Confident, as the prophet might be, that he was under the immediate protection of the Deity, and that therefore, whatever temporary accidents might befall him, it could not be otherwise than well with him in the end; yet had he no reason to flatter himself with a conquest over death. The common enemy of

mankind was, indeed, to be one day subdued, and swallowed up in victory; but the exploit was reserved for a nobler, a far more illustrious person, one to whom the epithet of God's Holy One could be applied in the strictest sense of the word, and whom corruption should have no hold of in the grave, because it never was to approach him whilst he lived. But though this, and many other of David's compositions, point evidently to times far distant from those in which he wrote, still they bear an immediate relation to his own particular circumstances, and may be looked upon as the effusions of a grateful and overflowing heart. Never, indeed, had any man found the Lord so near him at all times: God had, as it were, dwelt with him from his infancy, and accompanied him through all the revolutions of his fortune; he had turned the shepherd's crook into a sceptre; he had made wisdom, plenty, and victory, the

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companions of the throne on which he sat ; he had given him an heir, whose rising virtues one day promised to be equal to his own, and whose prosperity was to be proportionable to his deserts. Great and unmerited good fortune had a different effect upon David from what it generally has on mankind. Far from boasting that his own right hand had raised him from the poverty and obscurity to which his birth had condemned him, he is ever ready to ascribe the praise and the glory to his gracious Benefactor. Every page of his animated writings is dedicated to God's honour ; his songs are songs of triumph and exultation, in the wisdom, the power and the goodness of his Maker ; his prayers are appeals to his mercy, and confessions of his own unworthiness ; his instructions, those which he has left for our use, those which upon a death-bed he gave the best beloved of his children, are

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summed up in the comprehensive words of my text, 'Set God always before thee.'

I shall endeavour in this, and the following discourse, to point out four capital advantages which may be expected from following the holy man's advice; an advantage in our survey of the works of nature, an advantage in the reflections we make upon the history of past and present times; these shall be the subject of my first discourse. In my second, I shall consider God, first, as our guide in action; and secondly, as our strength in time of trouble, and our comforter at the hour of death: 'He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall.'

First, then, let us set God before us in our view of nature. He who looks for pleasures that never shall affect him either
with

with satiety or remorse, who would at once provide himself an entertainment which no stroke of fortune should be able to reach, and an employment which should yield him the richest returns for every hour that he spends in it, must become early acquainted with the wonders of the creation. It would be scarce possible to open our eyes without being struck with the beauties of the universe, if custom had not made them familiar to the senses. A restlessness in the possession of what he has most anxiously laboured to attain, and an eager pursuit after novelty, is what characterizes man on this side the grave. It is a fatal error in all cases, but never more fatal than in this. We despise the rich banquet which Providence has set before us, and purchase foreign gratifications at the expence of fortune, health and innocence. But were some friendly hand to remove the thick
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film which obstructs us ; could a salutary operation be found out suddenly to restore us to our understanding ; could the works of art be stripped of the gaudy dresses which our pride has thrown around them, and those of nature meet with eyes pure enough to behold them, we should not hesitate an instant. Art, the humble handmaid, may indeed assist us in discovering some beauties, and some uses which would otherwise have escaped our grosser senses ; she may call down the great luminaries from their inaccessible heights ; she may inquire of the winds their course, and of the lightning its direction ; she may raise Leviathan from his deeps, and make him, whose neck is clothed with thunder, to be fearful as a grasshopper ; she may descend into the store-houses of the earth, and fetch destructive presents from its entrails : all this, and more, she may in time arrive at ; but to equal,

equal,

equal, or imitate the least of these productions, is a task she must ever find herself unequal to. Let the son of David try the united efforts of his riches, his power, and his wisdom; let him employ the navy he has created in fetching gold from Ophir, and cedars from Lebanon; let him add the rich presents he has received; let Tyre and Egypt be exhausted to supply him with precious materials and cunning workmen; still will the lily surpass him in all his glory; and the temple which he is raising, what will it be in comparison of the stupendous fabric of which it is the humble emblem! Now if the works of nature be thus beautiful in themselves; if, upon a very slight survey, they force the unprejudiced beholder to acknowledge their superior excellence, how will his conceptions of them be exalted, if he sets before him the Architect who contrived them? Hitherto
they

they may have attracted his curiosity, amused his imagination, and engaged him in many ingenious conjectures into their nature ; still, while he rests in the works themselves, his intellectual faculties alone are exercised ; but when in them he contemplates the Creator, he must find, that although there be neither speech nor voice among them, they have yet a language for his heart. Soon as the Creator appears, the wonder of the creation appears to be a second time repeated ; the mingled elements separate and retire, each of them to the post which has been assigned it ; harmony and order succeed to discord and confusion ; these appear the soul of the great design, they unite its parts, they account for its variety ; not only the greater bodies appear to have been placed where they are, in consequence of some wise and benevolent intention ; the lesser ones, too, bear marks of

S E R M O N VI. 143

their divine appointment. The ant has a tale to tell as wonderful as that of the elephant; the shrub, which the traveller neglects, has virtues in it, as sovereign perhaps as those of the balm of Gilead which he is hastening to collect. Some things, indeed, we see imperfectly, others we have no notions of at all; still we see enough to convince us that the whole is of a piece, and the discoveries which are every day made heighten the conviction. Shall we then refuse the key which David would put into our hands? Shall we follow the atheist through all the cold recesses of an unfeeling heart, and hear his empty declamations on the eternity of the world, the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the idle doctrines of chance and necessity; or shall we join the company of Heaven in songs of gratitude and exultation? O Lord, how wonder-

wonderful are thy works ; in wisdom hast thou made them all !

We cannot indeed act otherwise, without being guilty of the deepest ingratitude. What other hidden purposes of wisdom the works of nature may fulfil, we know not ; but with one we are intimately acquainted. We are assured they were intended for the benefit and service of mankind. He who made them, resolved to appoint a king over them ; he called man out of dust, and invested him with the ensigns of supremacy. Revelation expressly tells us so ; and had Revelation been silent, the uniform deposition of nature had been sufficient to convince us. Is it not, indeed, to them that we owe all the comforts and conveniences we enjoy ? They minister to our wants in health, they repair the depositions of disease, they offer a variety of

innocent pleasures, they furnish the mind with the noblest objects of its meditations here, they prepare it for what will probably be its employment hereafter. And is it possible we should rise from so richly furnished a table, without remembering the Benefactor who has provided it? Can the representatives of so good a Prince forget the hand that placed them in the post of honour which they fill? ‘When I consider
 ‘the heavens the work of thy fingers, the
 ‘moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; I say, what is man, that thou art
 ‘mindful of him, and the son of man, that
 ‘thou visitest him? Thou hast made him
 ‘a little lower than the angels, and hast
 ‘crowned him with glory and worship;
 ‘thou madest him to have dominion over
 ‘the works of thy hands; thou hast put
 ‘all things under his feet. Bless, then, the
 ‘Lord, O my soul, and forget not any of
 ‘his benefits!’

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But, secondly, Great as the advantages are which we may promise ourselves from setting God continually before us in the physical world, there are no less to be expected, if we consider him in the moral. He has not, indeed, thought proper to make so clear a discovery of himself in the latter, as he hath done in the former. Order and harmony prevail in every part of the one; they seem totally excluded from the other: disorder and confusion seem to reign in their stead, insomuch that the recluse, who in solitary contemplation should have discovered in heaven the Divinity on his throne, relapses into doubt and fear, and would be liable to uncertainty, should he mix again in the commerce of the world. Not to accumulate instances of this, I shall only mention one. There is nothing which so much surprises us in history, as the accounts we meet with of the sudden
rise

rife and prosperity of great and powerful empires, except it be their as sudden declension and dissolution. A capricious fortune seems so much to domineer in both, that it is difficult to refer either (as the believer must do) to the superintendence of a wise and just Providence. Shall we say, in order to satisfy ourselves, that, as many curious processes are hourly carrying on in the caverns of the earth, which, for want of nicer organs, we are unable to discern; so our minds want the degrees of accuracy and subtilty necessary to trace the causes of events so remote from the times in which we dwell? Shall we compare ourselves to travellers, whom national prejudices, want of time, and languages, and other untoward circumstances, prevent from acquiring a sufficient knowledge of the manners of the people, and constitution of the countries through which they pass, to form a judg-

ment of the revolutions which have happened in them? Might not a modest inquirer urge, that what appears to be rough and incoherent, may be part of an unfinished but beautiful and uniform plan? This, and much more which may be said, will be sufficient to inspire us with humility. There are, however, two leading observations, which he cannot fail of making, who has been used constantly to set his God before him. In the first place, he will discover that there is one invisible power in the world, which has been constantly and invariably the same amidst every revolution which time has produced in others. 'They have perished, but thou shalt endure; 'they have changed, but thou art the same, 'and thy years shall not fail.'

A second truth, no less evident than the former, is, that national virtue, and national
pro-

prosperity are inseparably connected with each other. There have been men, I know, bold enough to erect altars to their own vices, and inscribe them with the pompous names of patriotism and publick spirit ; men who have seriously set about to prove, that the duties of the man misbecome the citizen, and that general benefits may be expected from what brings ruin, and shame, and death upon the individual. As there is no error so pernicious to society, happily for it there is none so easy to be confuted. Consult the historians of different ages, and different parties ; search the records yourselves, you will find them uniform in their depositions ; you will find that temperance and justice, moderation and good faith, have been the arts by which empires have been acquired and preserved ; and that, in proportion as the opposite vices have prevailed, they have decayed and been de-

stroyed: you will conclude, that righteousness exalteth a nation, sin is always the reproach, and in time must become the ruin of any people.

Here, then, let us pause awhile, and ask ourselves this plain, this interesting question, Are we really the lovers of our country which we pretend to be? Are we conscious of the advantages which make us the envy of the nations around us? Do we sincerely wish to transmit the precious legacy to our children? If we are indeed good citizens; if we are indeed good parents, we shall do well to remember, that the fate of what is dearest to us depends upon ourselves. We cannot all possess the same honourable employments in the state; let us not, however, envy those who fill them, the painful pre-eminence. Though more openly engaged in the great work, they are not
more

more efficaciously employed than ourselves. The blessing of Providence on the nation, without which all their endeavours must prove abortive, depends not so much on their labours, as it does on our virtues. There is a patriotism proper to every age, to every sex, and to every profession. Let us unite in it to a man; let us strive who shall be forwardest in removing the limits of time appointed to us as a nation; who shall be forwardest in disarming the ministers of vengeance, already, perhaps, employed in preparing the chariots of the living God. Let us, in short, and to conclude, set Him constantly before us, and remember, that if we do so, He will be our refuge in time of trouble, our shield against the pestilence, and our bulwark in the field.

S E R M O N VII.

PSALM xvi. 9.

*I have set God always before me ; for he is on
my right hand, therefore I shall not fall.*

S E R M O N VII.

AS my former discourse on these words was principally intended to shew what advantages might be expected in a speculative view of the subject, what I propose in this, is to examine the justness of the consequence which David draws, and to try if, with God at our right hand, we may indeed be assured of never falling. For this purpose I shall consider Him, as He may be our guide in action, our refuge in distress, and our comfort at the hour of death.

And, first, As He may be our guide in
action.

action.—That we want a guide, notwithstanding the boasted strength and improvements of our reason, is a truth too evident to be dissembled. Every man who hears me, has observed it of his neighbour, and more than once made the melancholy experiment himself. Scarce, indeed, have we passed the limits of infancy ; scarce have we escaped into what we vainly think a freer air, than we have reason to regret the salutary hours of restraint. The talk of our childhood is repeated in our youth, and the first steps we take in the world, convince us how unqualified we are to walk through it unsupported. To whom then shall we apply for advice and direction ? Who shall save us from the precipices which surround us, and from the corruptions inherent in our nature ? Shall we consult the tender parent, who hitherto has sheltered and preserved us ? The angel of
death

death is preparing to tear him from us for ever. Shall we open ourselves to a worthy and experienced friend? He will tell us, that we have too many enemies for his vigilance to discover; that we have not frankness enough to declare them all ourselves, and that, if we had, their advantages over him would still be too many and too considerable. Wherewithal then shall a young man cleanse his way? Let him remember that he has a Father who is eternal, and a Friend who is omnipotent and all-wise. Let him consider his Creator, the witness both of his actions and his thoughts. Let him constantly reflect, before he determines himself, whether the purchase he is about to make be worth the weight of remorse it will bring along with it; whether a temporary enjoyment can be put in competition with the approbation of his benefactor; whether the post of honour he is grasping

at, is worth the sacrifice of all the talents he had received for better purposes? Happy would it be for mankind, if the adulterer would reflect that there is a Being who can distinguish him, through the dark disguise he has thrown round him; if the assassin would listen to the importunate voice which warns him incessantly against murder. Happy would it be for us all, if not only in these greater instances, where nature recoils, and seems shocked at being suspected; but in our more ordinary transactions too, we would consider God as ever present and ever attentive. He saw the arrow we have just darted at our neighbour, before we took the deadly aim. He follows us through all the steps we are taking to deprive the stranger of his property by chicanery. He will be present at the contract we are preparing to sign with the credulous and unsuspecting, at the prostitution
of

of our honour and our talents in the senate, at the altar where we sacrifice our children to interest and ambition. He will punish openly whatever has been done in secret, and not only expose the frauds themselves, but also their motives.

It is impossible not to be affected with considerations of this kind; and he who has used himself to make them early and frequently, will want no other monitor against following the suggestions of his heart.

But you will say, perhaps, that it is not of this domestic enemy you are most afraid: thank Heaven, you knew betimes what a treacherous advocate he was, and have learnt to guard against his sophistry. What weighs most with you, is the general practice of the world, and the arguments it makes

makes use of to draw you with it: 'There
' is a danger in being righteous over-much,
' at least an inconvenience: why should a
' man set himself so much above his neigh-
' bours and his friends? It would be better,
' to be sure, if a man could always keep
' his passions within the bounds assigned
' them by religion; and yet, is not pre-
' sumption too a sin, as great as any we
' condemn? And is it not presumption to
' attempt giving lessons of wisdom to the
' hoary head? He who can believe God
' wants mercy, will but little practise that
' amiable virtue himself. You cannot
' believe that he will condemn all mankind
' merely for following inclinations which
' he has himself given them.—Nor, indeed,
' can you think that all vices are so dis-
' pleasing to him, as your preachers would
' make you imagine; would they be al-
' most always the companions of, and some-
' times

' times the road to, fortune, if they were ?
 ' Either suffer us to use the articles of luxury,
 ' which our merchants have imported, or
 ' drive us back again to the woods, which
 ' our fathers dwelt in, and to which you
 ' will bring us by degrees. Where is the
 ' prince bold and powerful enough, to prac-
 ' tise the amiable virtue of good faith, so
 ' strongly recommended in the Gospel, and
 ' so necessary in our private dealings with
 ' each other ?

Such are the guides which the world
 would substitute to God ; or rather such
 are the opponents which it sets against
 him. Weak opponents indeed ! if the servant,
 whom we trusted we had secured, has not
 already opened them too wide a gate ; if
 our own hearts be not accomplices in the
 fallacy.

M

First,

First, then, let me ask you what you would think of a merchant, who, upon opening his books, should find he had a large debt to pay, and yet refuse to discharge it, upon the vain supposition, either that his creditor never will exact it of him; or that, if he does, many others will be thrown into prison with him. If yourselves were in this man's circumstances, how would you treat a person, who should advise you to act in so absurd a manner? Would you reason the matter with yourselves, use no other arguments than the following; no sophistry could ever stand it: 'I am convinced that there is a God; nor
' can I have any doubts of my dependance
' on him. The situation in which I find
' myself; the benefits which I have already
' received; those which my heart tells me
' I have still reason to expect, speak to me
' with a voice too loud to be resisted. I
' know

'know too, that my Benefactor has made
 'a revelation of his will to me; and
 'amongst many other passages, equally
 'strong and forcible in it, I have often
 'read and meditated on the following:
 'Whosoever shall confess me before men,
 'him will I confess also before my Father
 'which is in heaven: and whosoever shall
 'deny me before men, him will I deny be-
 'fore my Father which is in heaven. Matt.
 'x. 32, 33.

' Shall I attend to the insidious plea of
 'a corrupt world; and after arrogantly hav-
 'ing made myself the judge between the
 'creature and the Creator, complete my
 'ingratitude by deciding the cause against
 'Omnipotence? Shall I then any longer
 'hesitate between God and Mammon?
 'Were there in reality as many difficulties
 'as is pretended, I might safely trust that

‘ they would one day be reconciled to
‘ principles of goodness and wisdom, by
‘ him who has given me so many solid
‘ proofs that he possesses both. Had tem-
‘ poral prosperity been indeed in a particu-
‘ lar manner the inheritance of the wicked,
‘ still I should have had no reason to com-
‘ plain ; I know the difference which a few
‘ years must put between us, and have
‘ learnt to calculate between time and eter-
‘ nity. But neither is this so evident as
‘ is pretended. Some of the roads, indeed,
‘ to fortune are difficult and impassable, to
‘ any but those who are determined no
‘ obstacles shall stop them : but then there
‘ are others which an honest man may
‘ tread with safety, and which, though not
‘ perhaps by the shortest way, lead as surely
‘ to the purposed end. But the end itself
‘ may not perhaps be so desirable as it ap-
‘ pears, at least it may not bring with it all
‘ that

' that deserves to have the name of happi-
 ' nefs. With the palace of the extortioner
 ' I am acquainted ; but do not hear the
 ' orphan and the widow's cry, which im-
 ' bitter every enjoyment he proposed in it.
 ' Sweet is the found of the instruments, and
 ' elegant the banquet which has been pre-
 ' pared for the voluptuous betrayer of his
 ' country ;—the sword which hangs over
 ' him, and seems to be suspended but by a
 ' thread, prevents him from partaking of
 ' either. Appearances then may be deceit-
 ' ful, nay, my heart tells me they are so:
 ' the greatest unhappiness which I have
 ' ever known, is that which arose from past
 ' misconduct ; but never have I done a
 ' virtuous action which did not give me
 ' pleasure, both at the time, and in the re-
 ' collection.' He who reasons in this man-
 ' ner, and it is impossible that any man, who
 ' seriously believes in the religion we are met

here publicly to profess, should reason in any other, will submit himself to the direction of his God, and tread with cheerfulness the path he has appointed him. Confident that the all-seeing eye is fixt in a particular manner on himself, he will remember the great Spectator of his actions in every circumstance of his life. In prosperity he will consult him as his friend, and fly to him in adversity as his protector: which leads me, in the second place, to examine what assistance the Christian may expect in the hour of danger and distress.

From the common miseries of humanity, the Christian has no exemption to plead. ‘Curfed is the ground for thy sake, and in
‘the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,’ was part of the dreadful sentence pronounced upon our first parents; when, after the forfeiture of innocence and immortality,
ashamed

ashamed and confused for the first time in their lives, they stood before the face of their offended Maker. It was not from this part of our punishment that our Saviour came down to relieve us. But as he himself was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs, he has left us an example that we should follow his steps, as bright in this respect as in every other.

But though the Christian should consider himself as a soldier, who is soon to be relieved and rewarded; though he should look upon every object, which does not actually seduce him from his service, as trifling and indifferent, apathy and insensibility are by no means required of him. The cry of nature will be heard; the wounds of the body will be felt; those of the mind will strike the good man with a deep, perhaps with a still deeper anguish than they do

the wicked. How many Rachael's are there, who weep for their children, and refuse to be comforted! How many Naomis, who, deprived of an affectionate husband, lament with bitterness, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against them! How many Davids, who are distressed for the loss of a companion and friend! But they are not, therefore, without hope. They know that there will come a time when these dearest parts of themselves will be restored, and that they shall meet them in a place where every sorrow shall be done away. Let the wicked man be comfortless, indeed, when intemperance, or public justice has hurried off the partner of his crimes. Let him whose guilty friendship (if guilt and friendship ever met together) has been interrupted by death, call in vain upon the grave to render up its prey. But let us remember the name of the Lord, and say to him, with
the

S E R M O N VII. 169

the afflicted Job, 'Thou hast given, and
'thou hast taken away; blessed be thy holy
'name for ever.'

Natural evils are not, however, the only ones to which we are exposed. Far greater and heavier are those which we bring on ourselves, or which are brought upon us by the folly or wickedness of others. Were these always, as they sometimes are, the reward of our virtues, we should remember that no greater happiness can be enjoyed by him, who was created in the image of a God, and whose image a God condescended to put on, than to go about doing good, and yet be despised and rejected by men. And as to the other, particularly those which we bring on ourselves, we should regard them as the paternal instructions of a provident father, who changes the poisoned chalice, which we had mixt, into a whole-

wholesome and salutary draught, and makes our imprudences themselves useful lessons of conduct for the future. Who is there, who, in the course of a long life, has not experienced this himself? Who can say that he never owed his abstinence from an unwarrantable passion, to the obstacles he has met with in his way, to the consequences he apprehended, or perhaps, to the bitter fruits he had already gathered in pursuits of the same nature? If there is such a one, he is a much happier, as well as a much better man than David, who expressly tells us, that before he was afflicted, he went astray; but that his misfortunes had taught him not to deviate from the statutes of the Lord. Therefore, says he, and let it be our resolution, as it was his, ‘I will put
‘my trust in thee, for thou hast delivered
‘my soul from death.’

Death

Death—one enemy, then still remains to be subdued, a dreadful enemy, if we meet him unprepared; an easy conquest, if we have set God constantly before us, and have reason to believe him at our right hand. What is there, indeed, so terrible in death that should make the good man afraid to face it? Can he regret that he is soon to be taken away from a scene of cares and disappointments, and removed into a better country? Solomon had told him, that all was vanity and vexation below, and his whole life has been little more than a comment upon the text. And yet the pious tears, which are flowing round his couch, will retard him a little in his flight; he would have wished to remain a little longer for the sake of a family, whose prospects must now be buried in his grave; for the wife whom he has tenderly loved; for the children, whose education he leaves unfinished.

unfinished. But he returns them to Him from whom he had received them; he resigns the best and dearest presents with as much cheerfulness, though not with as much unconcern, as he has parted from all the others; for he knows that, as soon as he is taken from them, the Almighty will overshadow them with his wings, that He will become the father of the fatherless, and husband of the widow. He who, at the last sad moment, finds himself unable to call back one good action to his remembrance; who having lost all sense of virtuous pleasures, has disqualified himself for any future society, but that of the wretched, may, and must be afraid to meet his Judge. But the resigned, the penitent, the humble sinner, he who has endeavoured to conform himself to Christ's example, and hath loved much, because much hath been forgiven him; he, supported in his last hour by that

2

faith

S E R M O N VII. 173

faith which hath been the principle of his life, will obey the summons without fear. He knows the tenderness of the tie which unites him to his God. He is assured, that he who made us frail and imperfect, will not expect perfection at our hands—that he hath provided a satisfaction for our imperfections. Already he sees the heavens open, angels hover round his bed, and wait to carry him to the mansions prepared for him by his Lord; he hears the comfortable voice of the Lamb who died to save him: ‘Come thou blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world.’

SERMON

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 died to save him: 'Come thou blessed
 of my Father, inherit the kingdom pre-
 pared for thee from the foundation of the
 world.'

S E R M O N VIII.

PSALM CXIX. 60.

*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy com-
mandments.*

S E R M O N VIII.

IT is a common practice, with men that are engaged in courses their own conscience discerns and disapproves, not to decline repenting altogether, but to adjourn the reformation of their lives to a farther time. Few resolve to persist finally in an evil way; but immediately and effectually to set about altering it, they deem needless and unseasonable, like bad debtors who always mean, and always promise to pay; or like empty spendthrifts, who, at the time their estate is daily waiving from them, think they shall always have enough left to serve their occasions. How fallacious, how dangerous,

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gerous, and how mischievous this manner of proceeding is; how much better, and more advisable it would be, speedily to betake ourselves to the discharge of our debt and duty to God, will appear from the following considerations, considerations to which I desire your particular attention, as you will answer it at the tribunal of that God when we shall appear there together.

In the first place, we must consider that the observance of God's commandments, an observance of them proceeding from an habitual disposition of the mind, influencing a constant and unremitted practice, is our indispensable duty, our main concern, our only way to happiness. ' If thou wilt enter
' into life, keep the commandments. The
' righteous Lord loveth righteousness; His
' countenance doth behold the upright. God
' will render unto every man according to
4 ' his

‘his works.’ These are oracles indubitably clear, and infallibly certain; these are immoveable terms of justice between God and man, which never will, nor ever can be relaxed. All the sense in the world, all the authority upon earth, cannot establish a condition, beside a faithful observance of God’s law, that can save or make us happy. If therefore we mean to be saved (and are we so insensible as not to mean it?)—if we do not renounce eternity (and can we look upon what is going forward here, and think it is so cheaply to be renounced?)—to become virtuous, to proceed in a course of obedience, is a work that must necessarily be performed, set about it when you will. And why then should not we instantly undertake it? how can we sit quiet with an affair of so much importance on our hands? how can we go on cheerfully and unconcernedly, until our mind is freed from all uncertainty

and suspense about it? Were a probable way suggested to us of acquiring great wealth, honour, or pleasure, should not we quickly pursue it? should we not leave every thing undone till it was brought to a prosperous issue? And why with less expedition or certainty, should we pursue the certain means of our present security and comfort, of our final happiness and salvation? In doing so are not we strangely inconsistent with ourselves?

2. We may remember, that, in order to our final welfare, we have much work to dispatch, for which, as it requires earnest care and painful industry, much time is wanting. If we do not make use of the present, we may find the future too short for our purposes.

He who by temper is peevish and choleric, cannot, without mastering that temper, become patient or meek. He who from
vain

S E R M O N VIII. 181

vain opinions is proud, cannot, without considering away those opinions, prove humble. He who by custom is grown intemperate, cannot, without weaning himself from that custom, come to be sober. The change of our minds is one of the greatest alterations in nature, which cannot be compassed in any way, or within any time we please, but must proceed on leisurely and regularly, in such order, and by such steps, as the nature of things doth permit; it must be wrought in us by a resolute and laborious perseverance, by a watchful application of mind in attending to all we do, by forcibly wrestling our nature from its bent, and swimming against the current of impetuous desires; by a weary fencing with temptations, and long struggling with oppositions and difficulties; whence the Holy Scripture termeth our practice a warfare. If, therefore, we mean to be good and happy, it behoveth us to

lose no time, but to be presently up at our great task. As those who have a long journey to go, take care to set out early, and in their way make good speed, lest the night overtake them before they reach their home; so, it being a great way from hence to heaven, seeing we must pass through so many obstacles, through so many paths of duty, before we can arrive there, it is expedient to set forward as soon as can be, and proceed with all expedition. The longer we stay, the more time we shall need, and the less we shall have.

3. We may consider, that no future time we can fix upon will be better than the present for reformation. Let us pitch upon a period ever so distant, we shall be as unwilling and unfit to begin as we are now; we shall find in ourselves the same indispositions, the same reluctance, the same aversion

sion we do now ; there will occur the like hardships to deter, and the like pleasures to allure us from our duty. We shall say, then, to-morrow I will mend; and when that morrow comes, it will still be to-morrow, and so the morrow will prove endless. If, like the rustic, who stood by the river-side waiting till it had done running, that so he might pass dry-foot over the channel, we imagine that the sources of sin, bad inclinations within, and strong temptations abroad, will of themselves be spent and fail, we shall find ourselves miserably deluded. At whatever time we reform, if ever we do, we must have a beginning attended with difficulty and trouble ; we must courageously break through the present with all its enchantments ; we must shake off the improvidence that detains us ; we must rouse ourselves from the bed of sloth ; we must plunge undauntedly into the cold stream,

and make our way through the strongest buffeting of the waves.

But, fourthly, The more we defer, the more difficult and painful our work must needs prove; every day will enlarge our task, and diminish our ability to perform it.

As vice grows in age, it improves in strength too, but it feeds upon our vitals, and thrives upon our decay; it becomes mighty by stripping us of our best forces, by enfeebling our reason, by perverting our will, by corrupting our temper, by debasing our courage, by seducing all our appetites and passions to a treacherous compliance with itself: first, we learn to bear it; then we come to like it; soon after we contract a friendship with it; then we doat upon it; at last we become enslaved to it, and are neither able nor willing to shake it off.

Indeed,

S E R M O N VIII. 185

Indeed, by long continuance in sin, the chief means afforded by nature or religion, for curing us, are either cut off, or enervated and rendered ineffectual.

Natural modesty, as long as it lasts, is a curb from doing ill; men in their first deflexions from virtue are all of them bashful and afraid; out of regard to other men's opinions, or tenderness of their own honour, they are ashamed to transgress the plain rules of their duty. In time this disposition wears out, they commit sin with an open face, and in broad day; they despise their own reputation, and defy every censure of others; they brave the world, and at length come to boast of their wickedness, and glory in their shame.

Conscience, likewise, which is a check to beginners in sin, often reclaiming them
from

from it, and always taxing them with a greater penalty than the pleasure they have received, becomes useless to those who have persisted long in vicious habits, and either fails to discharge its office, or attempts it to no purpose. Having often been slighted, it grows weary of chiding; or, if it is not wholly dumb, we become deaf to its admonitions; like those who, living by cataracts or water-falls, are so deafened by the continual noise, as not to hear or mind them.

Again, and a thing that is often met with by the ministers of the Gospel; for a time a man retains some courage and a hope that he may repent, but progress in sin dispirits and casts him to despair. He recollects his first ideas of God, what a dread he used to have of offending him; what a desperate thing he used to think it to brave his irresistible power, to thwart his infallible wisdom,

dom,

dom, to abuse his immense goodness; and this recollection, as it shews him the depth of the precipice into which he is fallen, makes him doubt of ever being able to regain the ascent. He doubts equally of God's mercy, and his own abilities to repent; he fears he has neither spirits to undertake the work, nor courage to keep him up through the length of it, nor strength to support him through the difficulties by which it is encompassed. He fears, and with some reason; for to retrieve a deflowered modesty, to quicken a jaded conscience, to supple a callous heart, to resettle a disturbed reason, to rear a dejected courage, to recover a soul benumbed and broken, to its former vigour and integrity, if it be a possible, can be no easy task.

That it is, however, a possible task, and that God will shed his blessing upon him who

who undertakes, and his mercy upon him who solicits the kind assistance, our holy religion teaches throughout every page of its comfortable declarations.

But, in the last place, we should consider that we are mortal and frail, and that consequently any future designs, of any nature whatever, may be cut off by death, which is always creeping towards us, and may, for aught we can tell, be very near at hand. You say you will repent to-morrow; but are you sure you will have a morrow to repent in? Have you an hour in your hand, or one minute at your disposal? Have you a lease to shew for any term of life? Can you claim or reckon upon the least portion of time, without his leave who bestoweth life, and dealeth out time, and ordereth all things as he pleases? ‘Boast not thyself of
 ‘the morrow, for thou knowest not what a

‘ day may bring forth,’ saith the wisest of mankind. Boast not, that is, do not pretend it to be at thy disposal, presume not upon any thing that may befall therein, lest it be said unto thee as unto the rich projector in the Gospel, ‘ Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.’ Does not every man’s life hang upon a thread very slender and frail? Is it not subject to many diseases lurking within, and to a thousand accidents flying round about us? How many that might have promised themselves as fair a prospect as we, have been unexpectedly snatched away! How many have been cropped in the flower of their age, and vigour of their strength! Every day furnishes us with instances of sudden death. Every day we see that observation of the preacher’s verified, ‘ Man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in
‘ the

‘ the snare ; so are the sons of men snared
‘ in an evil time, when it cometh suddenly
‘ upon them.’ Old men are ready to drop
off of themselves, and young men are easily
crushed or shaken down ; the former visi-
bly stand upon the brink of eternity ; the
latter cannot answer how soon they may be
hurried into it. We are all, therefore,
highly concerned to use life whilst we have
it, to catch the first opportunity, lest all
opportunity forsake us.

The sum of what has been said is this.
If it be certain that we must give a strict
account of all our doings here ; if, by rea-
son of our frail nature and slippery state, it
is uncertain when we shall be summoned to
it ; if our negligence may accelerate and
abridge the term, is it not very reasonable
to observe these advices of our Lord,
‘ Watch, for ye do not know the day nor
‘ the

‘ the hour when the son of man cometh.
‘ Take heed to yourselves lest at any time
‘ your heart be overcharged with surfeiting
‘ and drunkenness, and cares of this life,
‘ and so that day come upon you unawares.
‘ Let your loins be girded about, and your
‘ lamps burning, and ye yourselves like men
‘ that wait for the Lord :’ and to take the
advice of the wise man, ‘ Make no tarrying
‘ to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from
‘ day to day: for suddenly shall the wrath of
‘ the Lord come forth, and in thy security
‘ shalt thou be destroyed, and perish in the
‘ day of vengeance.’

S E R M O N IX.

LUKE ii. 13, 14.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God; and saying, Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men.

S E R M O N IX

S E R M O N IX

THAT a man of nature is a man of
war. He is a man of war, though
strongly combated both by the
minds, and to the world, and the
of humanity, and to the world, and
credit from the minds of the world.
apparently report in the world.

Scarcely had man been made after his
Market's image, than he was changed in
Discord entered the world with him. The
first two brothers were the first two ene-
mies; one of whom, soon after, making
himself answerable for the blood of the
other.

S E R M O N IX.

THAT a state of nature is a state of war, is an opinion, which, though strongly combated both by reason and humanity, seems (to the eternal reproach both of humanity and reason) to have gained credit from the multitude of facts which apparently support it.

Scarce had man been made after his Maker's image, than he disfigured it. Discord entered the world with sin. The first two brothers were the first two enemies; one of whom, soon after, making himself answerable for the blood of the

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other,

other, gave but too fatal reason to presume, that if the human race was to continue to exist, it was to exist in a state of discipline and restraint. Succeeding ages confirmed the supposition. Not to mention other numerous instances of it which might be brought, I shall only observe, that at the time when the spirit of adventure and avarice united, led our ancestors to explore the nations most remote from them; the civilized empire of China, in the old world, and those of Mexico and Peru in the new, were found to contain innumerable multitudes, dispersed far and wide over a country rendered fertile by their labours; whilst the vast deserts which surrounded them, abandoned, as well as their savage inhabitants, to the simple tutelage of nature, exhibited no other appearances, but those of wildness and desolation; excited no other ideas

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ideas than those of pristine anarchy and confusion.

Such, but for government, would have been the general face of the earth; and such, but for religion, would government itself have contributed to continue it. It would have caused men to hurt each other more secretly, and have furnished them with various means of shewing their animosity without danger to themselves; but it would have done comparatively little towards engaging them to love, and consider each other as brethren: and if there had been some crimes which, even in a state of nature, would not have passed entirely without reprehension, there would have been a multitude of others, far more destructive to the individual, as well as more prejudicial to the increase and preservation of the species, not only passed over with impunity,

but introduced, tolerated, and encouraged. It was to such a state of legal anarchy and confusion that things were actually tending at the time when our Saviour was born; for which reason, nothing could be more suitable to the benevolence of celestial natures, than to make the restoration of peace upon earth one principal subject of praise and gratulation in the heavens. ‘Glory to God in the highest; upon earth peace, good will towards men.’

In a former discourse, I endeavoured to warm your hearts by reflections upon the divine favour, manifested originally in the works of the creation, still farther exemplified in the care which God takes of his creatures, and carried to its greatest height in that signal instance of it, the redemption of the world, by the death and merits of his Son. The good will of God is
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upon the inhabitants of the earth. What remains to be done, is to try to examine how far the prediction of our text has been accomplished. And Secondly, To state the nature of that return which we are called upon to make.

Peace be upon earth, and glory be to God in the highest. Let peace be upon earth. As has already been observed, it was very far from being upon earth at the time that our Saviour came to give it. The religious divisions; the civil discords, and the public calamities of the Jewish nation, are well known from their history. The rest of the world groaned under the oppression of the Romans; who, exhausted by their proscriptions, and prepared for slavery by their vices, were soon to give ample satisfaction to mankind, by becoming subjected in their turn to the most detest-

able succession of tyrants, that, under the name of emperors, ever disgraced human nature and a throne. All, in short, was ignorance, superstition and terror: all equally remote from innocence, liberty, and national security, when the Prince of Peace came to establish his dominion, upon the cure of wounded consciences; the restoration of legal government; the re-union, or at least the invitation to a re-union, of all the nations of the earth.

First, The Prince of Peace appeared to administer relief to wounded consciences. What a terrible state of mind is that which accuses itself of crimes it feels itself incapable of renouncing! which has no sense of the Divinity, but as an angry and implacable task-master; and which, at the time that every thing is lost here, can discover nothing in hereafter, but punishment or annihilation! Terrible

as it is dreadful, as it has appeared in the few instances where long impenitence has exposed us to behold it (for remember, that long impenitence leads to it, even under the Gospel dispensation), it was, eighteen hundred years ago, the general situation of mankind: nor, so inveterate was the will grown, and so prone has man ever been to tread blindly on in the paths where he first trod, was it possible they should ever be released from it, unless they were first recalled to the primitive indeed, but so long violated that they had been almost forgotten, laws of nature; unless they were taught, still more from example than from precept, that these laws were agreeable to their feelings, proportionate to their strength, necessary to their welfare: unless the appellation of parent was restored to the Creator, and he was represented as attentive to the wants of his children, as

touched

touched with their infirmities, as ready to extend his compassionate hands for the removal of their fetters ; unless, especially unless these compassionate hands were represented as actually triumphing over the united forces of Satan and of death, and bringing life and immortality within the attainment of faith and repentance.

This it was that Jesus undertook ; and this it was that he effected. Henceforth, no doubt of what is right and just, to an inquirer who is modest ; no distrust of what will happen to him, when he has put off this mortal part, to a philosopher who is sincere ; no irremissible crimes to a penitent who begs forgiveness. Henceforth, no need of ascertaining the precise bounds where in-born conscience ceases, and the influence of education begins ; no obligation to obscure researches for proving the soul's

possible immortality by an investigation of its properties; no fond credulity in expiations equally cruel, unprofitable, and disgusting. All is clear without; all may be peaceable within.

All may be equally clear in your families, in your societies, in your governments, if you will only act that part which has been taught you. Examine the morality of the Gospel, and you will find that a country, in which it should become prevalent, would need no other tie to ensure its prosperity. It would be a community of brethren who would mutually assist, support, protect, and console each other: it would be a land in which property would be only ascertained, that it might be again more pleasurably communicated: it would be an association from the midst of which charity would banish strife, and exclude, first cover, and then exclude for ever

ever a multitude of sins : it would be one comprehensive, one feeling family, in which honour, gratitude, friendship, filial piety, love ; all the social affections would flourish with the same strength, the same freshness, the same purity, the same unalienable constancy that they had in the infancy of the world : it would be the Jerusalem of our God, the Mount Zion where he would love to dwell ; the temple where he would fix his habitation and security ; equal security from foreign and domestic foes, would attest that his glory rested round it.

Who is there, indeed, who is there, independantly of the resistance they would expect from a band of brothers, who is there would venture to attack a city constituted and defended in such a manner ? Who is there would be interested in being their enemies, who should neither insult, despise,

spife, envy, or refuse affiftance to any of their fellow creatures ? If they had enemies, their ftandard would be the general ftandard of the good ; and the Lord of hofts would lead their armies to the field.

Wherefore, alas ! then wherefore is there ftill fo little of reality in this perpective ? And was it, indeed, rather a wifh than a prediction, which was uttered by the meffengers of heaven ? Did they in truth forefee, that men would make an unworthy ufe of this laft prefent, as they had done of all others ? Did they anticipate ages ftill more dark than any which had preceded them, and difcover tyranny and fuperftition erecting their joint dominion upon the ruins of freedom, literature, and good-manners ? And were there no other profpects unfolded but the melancholy ones of a religion eftablifhed by mafacres ; and the fymbols of a
God

God of love, changed into the signals of havock and desolation?

Far be it from us to suppose it. Thank Heaven those days of blood are only to be found in the impartial chronicles, which hold up the crimes of ancestors for the instruction of their descendants: and thank Heaven still more, there is not a descendant but what blushes at the recollection of parental stains, and detests the uncharitable principles which occasioned them. This we owe to the progress of human reason, and more particularly to the effects of that improvement apparent in the reformation. What was done then, what, though imperceptibly almost, has been done since, even the works which our adversaries have raised to the honour of the living God; the seeds of tolerance, compassion, and general benevolence which they have scattered
amidst

amidst the tares, contribute to persuade us, that the re-establishment of all things will approach in God's due time ; and that our happier descendants, at least, will see the fortunate æra we have been endeavouring to describe. Parents of this flattering hope ; inhabitants of this favoured isle ; you, whose fathers took so active, so honourable a part in the great work, we persuade ourselves that you will prove faithful to the blood from whence you sprung ; that you will be the foremost to lay aside prejudices which still disgrace Christianity ; to give examples of forgiveness to brethren who differ from you ; to pity, cherish, console, and enlighten adversaries who have not had the same advantages of a religious education as yourselves. So shall the common Master be exalted as he desires ; so shall ' Glory be ' to God in the highest.' Which leads me
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to consider that part of the text which still remains to be explained.

It has been said, but it has been said by those whose niggard hearts never swelled with a sentiment of admiration for another, or were ambitious of it for themselves, that praising the Creator is not only useless and unseasonable, but indecent and unbecoming; that He is too superior to mankind to be affected either by praise or adoration. But is it possible that the giver of sensibility should be displeased at its expression? Is it possible that, incessantly employed in doing good, he should be averse from the acknowledgments which it extorts? And if those whom he has made after his image, feel themselves most nearly approaching to him, when the heart which they have made to sing for joy, bursts into transport and exultation; shall it be an attribute with the first

of benefactors to remain unaffected by his own donations? No; hence with such cold, such injurious disputations, the productions of those whose unfeeling hearts never swelled with a sentiment of admiration for another, or were desirous of it for themselves. Those who feel themselves capable of earning honest fame, know its value. They will not rob their Maker of the only tribute which he demands.

But then it must be remembered, that the incense itself should be pure, and the hands which offer it clean. He who said, 'Who-so offereth praise, glorifieth me;' said also, 'Praise is comely from the upright.'

Powerful as he is good, God would not want worshippers, though we should refuse or prove unworthy of attending at his altars. Nay, were our crimes to arm

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His severest justice against us, and provoke Him to banish us entirely from His presence ; think not that the acclamations of blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, which myriads of spirits round the throne are incessantly making to Him who sitteth on it ; think not they would be interrupted an instant by our fall. As clear, as transcendant, as worthy of homage from every thing that feels and reasons, when He judges, as when He shews mercy ; all His acts equally challenge from his rational creatures the highest adoration and praise.

Learn, then (and this is the first moral consequence I mean to draw from what has been said), learn to estimate the effects of your attendance here by the good you have done out of these walls. The angels of the Fiat bless God at the time that they are employed in executing his commands.

Imitate

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Imitate their example, if you hope one day to be possessed of their reward. Come hither with the consciousness of some worthy action performed since your last appearance in God's presence ; go from hence equally disposed to communicate the glad tidings you have received, and recommend them by the purity of your own life.

Secondly, Angels join in celebrating the redemption, though they were not included in the fall.

Be equally superior to envy, and ready to feel for those with whom you are not immediately connected. The only blessing worth being contended for, by creatures to whom sixty or seventy years constitute a very small part of an unlimited existence, depends entirely on our own efforts, and must be given in the exact proportion

which shall be allotted us, be there ever so many worthy fellow-labourers to share it with us. And as to extending our sensibility, exclusive of the temporal advantages resulting from it, which, in a discourse of this nature, it would be indecent to insist upon, we know that after the principal questions shall have been answered to our advantage, what has been done for the least and most distant little ones, will be one subject of inquiry, and have the greatest influence in finally determining our situation.

Thirdly, and lastly, Angels praise; and the glad appearances in the heavens bear witness that God is pleased with their gratulations. Let those who deserve honour in the sight of men, not refuse to give glory to their Maker, by receiving it; and let those who see their good works, afford those who exert them, liberally afford them the
only

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only recompense for which they toil, their approbation and esteem; and not from an adulatory and self-interested view to the returns, but for the honour of God, and the general interest of mankind. There is, indeed, only one way of opposing the torrent successfully, in an age where vice is honourable, and even the loss of honour compensated by external qualification; there is only one way of producing the so long wished for peace on earth; that is, if the good will unite on their part, and form as strong an association for the protection of virtue and religion, as the abandoned railers of the age seem to have done for their extirpation. If they will join in rescuing those acts from oblivion, which prove that man does consider himself as an accountable being, and that *he* is capable of making painful sacrifices to eternity; if they will appal the wicked and encourage the weak,

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by frequent and public recitals of them, keep them constantly in their own sight, to strengthen, support and assist them, like the miraculous star which conducted the Eastern Magi on their journey. Which that we may all do, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

ACTS, xxiv. 8.

*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with
you, that God should raise the dead?*

S E R M O N X.

I F we are a collection of men and women, it is not to be
for ever ignorant of the world, it must be
owed too, that we are not to be
often taken in by the world, the
lively idea as much as of the world
incapacity to disbelieve, as it is to
every thing. Doubtless, if the thing pro-
posed has a palpable absurdity upon the
very face of it, or if it is offered to be
supported by weak and ill-arguments
evidence, we do right to reject it at once;
but then, we ought to be well assured the
deception is not in our own weak eyes, and
that we do not make our own judgment too
certain.

S E R M O N X.

IF, as a celebrated writer has it, credulity serves ignorance for a pillow; it must be owned too, that laziness and self-love have often taken incredulity for theirs. But surely it is as much a sign of littleness and incapacity to disbelieve, as it is to admire every thing. Doubtless, if the thing proposed has a palpable absurdity upon the very face of it, or if it is offered to be supported by weak, and at best suspicious evidence, we do right to refuse it our assent; but then, we ought to be well assured the deception is not in our own weak eyes, and that we do not make our own inadequate conceptions

ceptions the sole criterion of all possible contingencies.

Nothing is more fully proved, than that, in the immense scale of created beings, there exist different degrees of perception and power. What to the inferior creature, man, has the appearance of prodigy, seems only a common effect to the meanest of those who stand about the throne, who again may have their eyes dazzled, and their faith exercised, by objects as far above their ken, as what astonishes us is above ours.

It is easy to guess what is intended by these introductory remarks. Our Saviour's victory over the common enemy is an event of too interesting a nature not to engage us willingly in reflections on it. Had it been doubtful, we should have had the
greatest

greatest reason in the world to wish it true; how ought we not then to rejoice, when we not only find the fact itself has been established on the strongest historical evidence, but see every opposition and cavil that can be made against it foreseen and answered in the remarkable words I have just been reading: ‘Why should it be thought ‘a thing incredible with you, that God ‘should raise the dead?’

They were addressed to Festus and Agrippa, the former a Roman governor, the other a king of the Jews. If Agrippa had not apostatized from the faith of his fathers, St. Paul would have had no reason to expect an opposition from him. There was nothing new in the general proposition, that God would raise the dead; on the contrary, we find that it made a considerable part of the received doctrine, and was regularly

regularly taught by the Pharisees who sat in the chair of Moses. How, indeed, it came to have so little influence, either on their lives, or those of their disciples, might occasion us some surprise, if we did not know it is not the last time that very settled principles, in matters of faith, have been found joined to very indifferent works. Indeed, it is not impossible that something like the comfortable doctrine of a purgatory might have crept in even thus early, and have proved as lucrative to the ancient Pharisee, as it has done since to the modern one. Perhaps too, Agrippa may occasionally have given some such reason for his apostacy. Nothing has been more general in all ages, than to make the vices of the clergy serve as an apology for irreligion. It is probable, however, the young king was influenced by much stronger motives: he had been bred in the court of one Roman Emperor, and
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was the actual favourite of another: no doubt he had learnt the delicate art of flattering with address, by adopting the principles of his protectors, especially if we consider that he could do it without risking much from the resentment of his countrymen. The Epicurean at Rome might easily have become a Sadducee at Jerusalem, as they were sects not more remarkable for the similarity of their tenets, than for ranking almost all that was great and illustrious in each country in the number of their followers. Would to Heaven it had been the last time riches and infidelity had been seen in company together with each other; and that Mammon had not even now more triumphs to boast of than the rest of our enemies put together! St. Paul, however, seems to have known the king better than he did himself. Well acquainted with the several arts men, who are under the
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influence of a particular passion, use in imposing on themselves; he not only saw Agrippa acted from motives of interest, but that he acted in direct opposition to his conscience. Hence it is he seems to attack him with the sword of faith, and to direct that of reason against Festus. ‘Believest thou in the Prophets?’ says he to the one: ‘I know that thou believest;’ and to the other, ‘What absurdity is there in conceiving a man to have risen from the dead?’ The Roman, instead of answering, treats him as a madman; whilst the Jew lets him see, nothing but his fears of losing too much by it, prevents his becoming a Christian. Had not the prisoner been in chains, and the judges vicious, each of them had been a convert.

Very inferior to the Apostle in all the requisites of Christian oratory, may I not flatter myself with one advantage over him

in the characters of those I am speaking to? May I not hope most of you only want to be reminded of the things which belong to your peace; or that if there are any unfortunately tainted by the prejudices of the times, I have not at least either Festus's insults, or Agrippa's want of candour to apprehend from them.

Two truths may be collected from the text. First, That the making us rise from the dead will be a free act of God's power, which Revelation alone can assure us. Secondly, That reason, unable of herself to procure this assurance, receives it with complacency when it is made to her. I shall endeavour to be as clear and as brief as possible upon each of these propositions.

First, then, I am to shew, that a resurrection of the dead is a free act of God's power,

power, which Revelation only could assure us of.

Man has, in all ages, been a riddle to himself. The nature of his soul, the action of his body, the origin of the first, the end of the last, have ever been problems above the reach of unassisted reason. Am I animated by a particle of the creative spirit, which must return and be joined again to the great whole from whence it has been detached? Am I composed of two separate substances, joined only to each other for a time, the one material and perishable, the other invisible, unextended, imperceptible except by its effects, and which will forsake me at death, without leaving any signs behind it, either of where it has been, or whither it is going? Should I rather look upon the faculty of thinking, with all its noble train of corresponding modes,
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only as the result of a particular organization, and a singular property assigned to animal bodies by Him which gave them being? Which ever side I take I remain in doubt, and always find more reason to suspect the choice I have made, than sound argument to confirm me in it. Unhappily too, what would be most satisfactory does not seem most probable. Consider appearances, and it is more in the extent than quality of His perfections, that the human species seems to differ from the brute creation; this again, by a scarce perceptible gradation, seems confounded with the vegetative, which you scarce attempt to trace through all its parts, before you find yourself insensibly wandered into the material. Thinking and volition, so generally called the distinctive faculties of man, are not in fact confined to him alone; they follow the same order of progression, and are

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lost

lost somewhere in the immensity of the chain, without its being possible to fix on the precise link in which they cease to be perceived. Different as the properties of the spiritual principle are from any of those which are known to belong to matter, it is evidently influenced by the organized receptacle in which it is contained. The soul and body are equally weak in infancy; they gather strength together, assist each other in improvement; arrive nearly at the same time at the highest point of perfection they are capable of reaching; are exposed to the same accidents, impaired by the same disorders, and insensibly debilitated and reduced by the same unsparing hand of Time. When Death destroys the house, we lose the inhabitant in the ruins; either the ravager carries him off, or suffers him to escape, when no local habitation can be guessed at; no substance assigned to him; no future object

ject of his existence ascertained; no time for his duration limited. Socrates, just preparing to drink the poison to which an ungrateful and unjust country has sentenced him, endeavours in vain to cheer his weeping friend, with telling him, it is another Socrates that is to suffer; and that, on the contrary, he that is speaking will soon be free. Free, my Socrates! how, when, where? What sensation, what knowledge, what affection wilt thou be capable of, when once thy body has been torn from thee? Say rather, an eternal sleep awaits to bind thee. Say rather, that, like other unsubstantial shadows, thy first steps must be directed to Lethe, and thy first office be that of drinking oblivion to thy friends and to thyself. It is true, indeed, that from the idea of a just and holy God, some faint, imperfect notions of a future state might have been collected; that it might have been thought vice would

not always go unpunished, or virtue unrewarded. But then it must be owned too, that these comfortable expectations were much too vague to be built upon with any kind of certainty; it must be confessed, man could not be sufficiently acquainted either with the Divine nature, or that of his fellow-creatures, to know what resources injured virtue might have within herself, or what secret pangs vice, however apparently unruffled and triumphant, might be exposed to. Consequently, there could be no assurance of an universal retribution. If there could have been one, still it must have remained doubtful, how long a term Providence would employ in this second vindication of itself; doubtful whether it would last throughout eternity, or be limited, as it might be, by the dispensations of an instant; doubtful whether it would occupy all the powers of the soul, so as to leave it
nothing

nothing farther to desire; doubtful whether it would be final, and set us above the reach of any temptation that might endanger it.

These were, these are still the clouds which rest upon the undiscovered country; clouds impenetrable for philosophy ever to break through, and which only revelation can remove. It speaks when reason is silent, it decides when she remains uncertain, it satisfies when she cannot help being alarmed. It tells us, all Scripture, but particularly the Gospel tells us, that together with this body the first man received a living soul, a soul incapable of acting but in concert with a body, and which, therefore, will a second time be joined to one far more glorious and far more excellent than the former, not to be impaired by time, not to be corrupted by death. It was im-

possible, for reason alone to discover this: once discovered, it is as impossible she should refuse her assent to it: which is what I farther propose to demonstrate, by separately considering, first, our Saviour's resurrection, and then our own.

That natural causes are incapable of recalling life when once it has fled; that art, however successful it may prove in warding off the blow, becomes impotent and of no effect when it has been struck; that a man who has been nailed for several hours to a cross; who has been exhausted by loss of blood, convulsed, and deprived of respiration by pain; and who has had the immediate organ of his life pierced through with a spear, that such a man ought to be looked upon as irrecoverably dead: these are truths which every hour's experience confirms, and to which every man in his senses readily assents.

affents. What human effort, indeed, could have revived a cold and breathless corpse, which interested friends, as well as enemies, had examined before it was deposited, and which had lain two nights and two days in the grave, under the custody of those who had the highest interest in preventing a deception, had it even been practicable to attempt one? A deception was impossible; a resurrection capable of proof. All the organs of life remained entire, and as yet not a particle of them had been dissolved. Nothing farther was requisite, than to consolidate wounds naturally mortal; to restore fluidity to the blood, and action to the heart. And can it be imagined it was more difficult to awaken motion in, than it had been at first to give it to these springs? or, that he whose nice hand had contrived and adapted the several parts of the machine to each other, could not cement them

again together, and restore what properties had been destroyed? So far from it, that even the heathen believed the Divinity had sometimes interposed, and made a second present of existence to the most distinguished of its favourites. Nor would the deist attempt to contradict the particular fact, if we did not make use of it to prove a general proposition, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.' This is what he rejects with disdain; and, it must be owned, he would do it with reason too, if, instead of resting satisfied with what has been taught us by the Evangelists and Apostles, we should adopt the reveries and baseless superstructures of modern philosophers. If, for instance, we should pretend our bodies will be exactly the same at the resurrection as they are now; how is it possible they should be exactly the same? What size, what shape, what dimensions could

could a man have, if all the atoms that, at separate times, have entered into his composition, were collected into one mass? Is the world, or even the universe, large enough to supply its assembled inhabitants of all ages with matter? How can it be possible, that elements, which have passed successively through many bodies, should at the same time resume their places in each of them? Who should adjudge the particle, which, like the wife mentioned in the Gospel, has not only belonged to seven, but to seventy times seven proprietors. The ground is not tenable; thank Heaven, then, that we are not obliged to defend it: let us repair to the eminence where indeed we shall be impregnable; let us assert, with St. Paul, that, though we shall not all die, we shall be all changed; that we shall rise indeed with bodies, but with different and far more glorious bodies than those we went

to sleep in ; that, notwithstanding the difference, the new body will serve in some measure as the old one did, assist the soul in recollecting the impressions made on it in a former state, and partake with it of the pains and pleasures of the present. This, undoubtedly, will be a miracle, and one of the greatest of miracles; so far, however, from being superior to that of the first creation, that we may even suspect there are some imperfect representations of it in the common operations of nature. It cannot be denied, but that the Being who created the first body out of dust, has both power enough, and materials enough, to produce a second like the former, in every other respect, and only superior by being made immutable and more perfect. Whatever consciousness of past existence is necessary, may easily be supposed to arise from a similar union of the two substances, and from

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our having organs answering to those which we possessed before. Our Saviour's design, in comparing the human body to a grain of wheat, which must rot in the ground ere it can produce fruit, seems to have been that of elevating our imagination, at the same time that he was willing to guard against its taking a wrong direction. It is not impossible this outward case may contain an infinitely small stamen in it, which is linked to the soul during its continuance here, serves it as a vehicle at its separation, and afterwards expands and stretches itself into a second habitation for it, as much above the first in beauty and elegance, as the butterfly is above the caterpillar which covers it. This latter emblem was not unknown to the heathens. In one of their most copious languages, we find the same word made use of to express both soul and butterfly; an evident vindication of what they

they imagined was to happen to the former, after it should have thrown off the clogs, and be recovered from the numbness which restrained it here. Nothing was wanting, except a knowledge of the resurrection of the body, to make this ingenious opinion strictly philosophical. So that St. Paul might with as much justice ask Festus as Agrippa, 'Why he believed it 'a thing impossible, that God should raise 'the dead?'

True, however, might Festus have answered him, you have proved the resurrection of him you called the Christ; you have likewise made it appear not improbable, that all the dead will be raised; but how do you establish a connection between the two propositions? What has the Son of Mary's resurrection to do with mine, any more than the son of Apollo's? Why talk

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to me of Jesus, rather than of Æsculapius? The solemnity of the day naturally leads us to examine what arguments the Apostle relied upon; but, as the discussing them all would carry me too far, I shall just mention the principal one: Amidst the numberless prophecies, whose accomplishment proves the truth of our religion, there are two remarkable ones applicable to this point; the first was made by God himself; when having suffered the prince of darkness to bring sin and death into the world by the first man's disobedience, he assured him, a time would come when the woman's seed should bruise his head; that is, destroy his usurped dominion, and abolish the penalty he had introduced. This is what St. Paul alludes to in that beautiful chapter, equally precious in the eyes of reason and those of faith, which our church has so judiciously set apart for her

her burial-service; when he says, 'That as
'by man came death, by man came also the
'resurrection of the dead.' Add to this
Isaiah's lively portraiture of the Messiah;
which, though done six hundred years
before his arrival, has such strength of pen-
cil, and freshness of colouring in it, as, if
we did not know to the contrary, would
make us believe it the work of an Apostle,
rather than of a prophet. He was op-
pressed, and he was afflicted; he was brought
as a lamb to the slaughter, and he made
his grave with the wicked; yet he shall
see his seed, he shall prolong his days, he
shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall
be satisfied. The lines are precise, the fea-
tures are determinate; they all belong to
the same person. We must either disbelieve
in the prophecy entirely, or deny the best
attested of all historical facts, or allow the
deduction

deduction reason makes from a past truth to a future one. It is not a dark inquiry ; Heaven grant we treat it not as an indifferent, or suffer it to prove an unprofitable one.

definition reason makes from a fact
to a future one. It is not a dark
Haven, that we trust it not as an
idea or after it to prove an unprovable

S E R M O N X I.

LUKE, ii. 29, 30.

*Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in
peace, according to thy word. For mine
eyes have seen thy salvation.*

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3 E R M O N XI

3 E R M O N XI

CHRIST

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S E R M O N XI.

CHRIST's appearance at the appointed time was, undoubtedly, the greatest blessing which Heaven could bestow, and man receive. Justly, therefore, may its votaries break forth into the most rapturous expressions of praise and thanksgiving, both to the Father who projected, and the Son who undertook the glorious work. Every time you search the instructive records of past ages; every time you read the barbarous characters of antiquity, and compare them with the bright pages of your own history, you will reflect with gratitude and astonishment on the very dif-

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ferent fate of your ancestors and yourselves, You will bless the good Being who, having appointed to every man a short interval of time for him to occupy upon earth, has cast your lot in such a manner, as to have made every possible benefit of existence open to your enjoyment. And this you will do, both as individuals whom Christianity has taught all the charities of life, all the sweet duties and endless pleasures which follow the endearing names of husband, child, and parent; and as the members of a community which it has raised to an uncommon degree of splendour, and still continues, thoughtless and ungrateful as we are, still continues to distinguish and exalt. In doing so, you will do right. But that Simeon, a very old man, a good and wise man too, one who consequently must have been long since tired and fatiated with life, should have obtained a prolongation of it,

it, only to hold the fovereign in his arms, whose glorious reign he never could hope to behold ; that this should be the subject of such apparently immoderate joy, and that having experienced it, he should not have become sollicitous to gain, if possible, a still farther respite, that he should not have eagerly desired a few years longer to see at least what the morning of this great day would produce ; this, I say, may at first a little surprize us.

To explain the motives of this disinterested joy will be the subject of my first part ; to point out the reasons of this apparently intemperate longing after death, the purport of my second ; and to enforce the practical lessons which the good old man has left us all, the design of my third.

First, then, we are to examine the motives of Simeon's joy.

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It did not, surely, take its rise in the satisfaction of an idle and unmeaning curiosity. Restless and uneasy as we have accustomed ourselves to be from our cradles, something new and uncommon is ever wanting to animate and awaken us. The common blessings of life, though given in ever so large a proportion, meet with thankless and inattentive eyes; the merest bauble, which has but the charms of novelty to recommend it, attracts, catches and fixes them. Are we told of the arrival of some extraordinary person—our streets are crowded with passengers, who are inquiring for his habitation. The man of pleasure forgets his object; the business of the mechanic is at a stand; even maternal tenderness, the strongest and most amiable of our many passions, yields for a moment to the weakest and most despicable; and she, who a little before would have died to save her little one,

one, hazards both its life and her own, rather than not be satisfied. All run with eager eyes, and busy faces, as if the stranger were a special messenger to themselves, and the business of the nation stood suspended till they came. Are the times of our annual rejoicings about to return—how impatient are we of admittance to pleasures, which have cloyed us a thousand times! how angry at a disappointment, though the hand of Heaven should have occasioned it! how ashamed and uneasy, till the following year has given us an opportunity of repairing it, by tiring ourselves once more! But these are only ridiculous effects of a ridiculous passion: What shall I say of our many cruel amusements? what of our public executions? Our public executions themselves, the loss of citizens, a day which was always a day of mourning in Pagan Rome, is always changed into a

day of festivity and rejoicing, by a polite and good-natured people. Leave, my countrymen, leave the melancholy victims of publick justice, to the melancholy ministers of its vengeance. Your country reluctantly sacrifices them to your security ; disturb not the awful sacrifice it has ordained. Come not out to gaze at the unfortunate. Let not those amongst them who are disposed to play the last sad part of life, with as little dignity as they have gone through all the rest, be encouraged to it by your applause and acclamations. Hazard not the loss of your own sensibility, the foundation of all your other virtues, your characteristic as a nation ; by trusting it to sights like these, they will in time cover your hearts with an hard and impenetrable callus ; they will steel them against the soft emotions of pity ; kind, tender, and compassionate as you may now think yourselves, they will

will make you cruel, unfeeling and unrelenting, bad citizens, in short, bad relations, and bad friends. Other solemnities there are which will produce quite a different effect, at which it becomes us all to be present, from which we cannot abstain without incurring the suspicion of being enemies to our country. Such are the returns of gratitude it has ordained for great blessings, the anniversary of an almost miraculous deliverance; of a restoration of an excellent constitution, of a revolution, by which it has been perfected and settled. Occasions like these force the busiest of us from our houses, they cheer and animate the most distressed, they speak a language to every age, which every age can understand and answer; our infants join in the general transport, they add their yet unmeaning joy to ours, lisp the names of their benefactors, and learn to love their country. Our old
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men pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and draw happy omens of the future from the past.

Simeon's honest transports were of this kind. The measure of his joy was at once the measure of his benevolence; he holds the glory of Israel, the light of the Gentiles in his arms; and whilst he does so, all the wonders of grace and redemption crowd at once upon his mind, and fill it with a pleasing kind of confusion. The messenger of peace is before him, not the messenger of a partial and temporary peace, but the mediator of an universal and everlasting covenant. The Father of his creatures, the long expected King of Glory is at length arrived, to take possession of his throne, and sit upon it to all eternity. What good man can refuse to join his voice to this chorus? 'Lift up your heads, O ye everlasting

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‘lasting gates, and the King of Glory shall
‘come in.’

Benevolence, then, was the first and principal motive of Simeon’s joy, but it was not the only one; a second, scarce less powerful, was the final accomplishment of what he had so long prefaged and waited for. Weak and mistrustful as we are, no promises are strong enough to fix our wavering faith; the infirmity of nature at times returns upon us all, and the best man’s life has its moments of doubt and uncertainty. No sooner has a blessing of any kind been announced, than it is eagerly expected: is the time elapsed which we had fixed for its arrival; a time which probably our impatience has miscalculated—we despair and give it over. Rather than indulge a farther hope, we force our very virtues to depose against us. Modesty tells us that we

have misunderstood the terms, or else Humility is ready to attest that the blessing was indeed designed and directed, but that our errors have never suffered it to reach us. This is often the case in our temporal affairs, sometimes too in our spiritual. We forget that man is liable to change, but that God is the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever.

Now if Simeon may, without injustice, be supposed to have been infected with this weakness, no times or country were ever more proper to nourish it than those in which he lived. Jerusalem had her scoffers too, those who veiled their ignorance with contempt for the knowledge they had neglected to acquire, and who laughed in public at what they dreaded in their retirements. The Sadducee, who had sacrificed his hopes of life and immortality to the reputa-

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reputation of passing for a man of fine parts, and deep reading; the Pharisee, who covered his hypocrisy and unbelief under an affected concern for God's honour, and a declaration that he thought one revelation sufficient; the unhappy apostate, who had conformed at the altar of Jupiter to be appointed tribune in the Roman army; the servile courtier of Herod, who knew that temperance and a judgment to come were very improper subjects of conversation for his royal master's ear, and therefore never mentioned them himself, nor suffered them to be mentioned in his company; all these must have been Simeon's professed and inveterate enemies. Often, therefore, might the venerable man have found himself exposed to the bitterest persecution which an ingenuous mind can suffer: often must he have been held out to the contempt and derision of his fellow-citizens;

citizens; puzzled with insidious questions about the meaning of dark and obscure expressions in the oracles which he alleged; taunted with the want of elegance and precision in the style of them; charged with the blunders of copyists and transcribers; bewildered in the mazes of geography and chronology; haply, it may be, reproached with the misfortunes of his country; treated by the Romans as the secret abettor of sedition, and by the Jews as a mad enthusiast, whose frantic incoherent ravings had led so many wretches to assume the name of the Messiah. The true Messiah at length appears; he is brought to the temple, and the prophet has him in his arms. What an alarm upon the Synagogue! what a confirmation of all the hopes which Mary has conceived of her son! What a triumph to the good old man himself!

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Poor, however, are the triumphs which follow victory in matters of mere speculation, where nothing farther is to be gained than the settlement of an unimportant opinion, or the momentary reputation of superior abilities. Into disputes of this kind the best of men may unwittingly be drawn; but he will ever be the first to be ashamed of his success: but when essential points of faith or morality are to be established; when important illustrations of revelation are to be vindicated; when both the present and future happiness of our fellow creatures seems to depend upon the successful exertion of our powers, then it is that the Christian soldier quits his ranks with eagerness, demands the battle, and fights the quarrels of mankind. There, if he conquers, the joy is sincere, whilst the public happiness which he bestows, brings security and pleasing hopes, and a long train of bright prospects to himself.

Simeon's

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Simeon's joy had a third character of this kind in it. Christ appears, and life and immortality appear with him. Hitherto the good old man may have been anxious about his future fate, and afraid to die; now he sees that death too will be swallowed up in victory; he sees that his Redeemer liveth; he is assured that, though worms destroy his body, yet in his flesh he shall see God. How different is such a man's state of mind from that of the modern Jew; even of the most moral and most enlightened! Dreadful, indeed, is his condition, whose knowledge only serves to increase his doubts, and whose distempered palate is incapable of relishing even the living waters! Sad is the alternative between incredulity on one side, and the prospect of sure misery on the other! Sad as the choice is, the modern Jew can have no other: The sceptre was not to depart from Judah

Judah till Shilo should arrive; and lo the sceptre is departed! Seventy weeks were determined upon to finish the transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Seventy weeks have long since elapsed! What then can he, who still expects the Messiah, believe, except that it be that his countrymen's sins have conspired with his own to delay the blessing, if not totally to prevent it? What can he expect but punishment or annihilation? What prayer can he utter, amidst the anguish of a distracted and self-reproaching mind, but the sad reverse of happy Simeon's? Leave, O Lord, leave thy wretched servant a little longer upon earth till mine eyes shall have seen thy salvation; till I may have leave to hope that my sins are pardoned; till I shall be able to meet thee without apprehension. Life can have no miseries severe enough to war-

rant a desire of quitting it in the modern Rabbi. It could have no charms for Simeon, to make him desirous of remaining in it: which I farther propose to illustrate from some general considerations on his advanced age, and some particular ones on the manner in which it is probable the remainder of his life must have been spent, if it had been prolonged.

Simeon was a very old man. It is said by a Heathen author, that two young ones having drawn their mother's chariot to the temple upon a certain festival, the gods were desired by the grateful parent to shew their approbation of the pious deed, by instantly rewarding it with the greatest blessing they could bestow: they consented, and the pious sons fell dead before their altars. The youngest of us, too, may sometimes perhaps have had reason to doubt

doubt whether life was otherwise a blessing at any age, than as a passage through it prepared us for eternity. But be this as it may. Let the gay votaries of pleasure be numerous as they will. Fair is the lovely season of youth, and charming its various sweets. Not so the sad winter of our days. What! when every sense is benumbed and almost frozen! when the curtain has already fallen upon the beauties of nature, and nought remains but darkness visible! When the active and immortal part of us is confined to a small number of confused remembrances, and loaded with uneasiness and regret! When, long since burthenfome to our friends, we are at length become so to ourselves; even then, shall an old man meanly court a respite he cannot enjoy? And will he not be satisfied till he has exhausted the very dregs of the bitter cup? Not so, thought

Barzillai the friend of David. When pressed by him to go up to Jerufalem, he answered, 'I am this day fourscore years old, and can 'I discern between good and evil? can thy 'servant taste what I eat or what I drink? 'can I hear any more the voice of singing 'men and singing women? Let me then 'return, and die in mine own city.' Not so thought Simeon; as soon as he is assured his heavenly country is accessible, he grows desirous of returning to it, he wishes to depart in peace.

In peace!——Yes, the last peaceful morning he must ever see has risen on him! Could his life be prolonged, it would only make him the companion of his Master's sufferings, the witness of the Jews' ingratitude, perhaps of their punishment. Not only the present joyful moment has been revealed, the succession of melancholy events

events which are to follow it are well known. Already has he told the fond and exulting parent, that a sword shall pierce through her own soul. The opposition her son must meet with, his death and passion, their dreadful circumstances perhaps, Judas, Peter, Pilate, the thief, the spear, crowd at once upon his mind, and check the fervency of joy. Could he for an instant take his eyes from the guilt of his countrymen, it must be to fix them on their punishment. Heaven has already heard and ratified the parricidal vow; the ministers of vengeance are preparing the chariots of the living God; he comes to demand the righteous blood from the murderers and from their children; earthquakes, famines, and pestilences are his forerunners, and must succeed each other till Jerusalem is no more. What good man can be an unmoved spectator of his country's misfor-

tunes, or wish to survive its fall? A virtuous Roman would have released himself; a believer humbly prays that he may depart in peace. Not, however, that Simeon is unwilling to remain if God shall judge it better for him; or that, like a cowardly and unprofitable servant, he refuses to share the fortunes of his Lord. Could he think that he is still any way necessary to his great design, he would follow him with cheerfulness and joy. Did he imagine that those who have refused to hear Moses and the prophets, and who are so soon to give a fatal proof of their still greater deafness and obstinacy, would be moved by his voice, that the honeyed eloquence of an old man would work upon them, that they would reverence his hoary head, or that his last words at least would sink deep into their minds, no fears of personal safety should restrain him. How could a faithful and old
servant

servant conclude his well-spent life better
 than by falling in the cause of his Master?
 What more splendid reward of his services
 could he expect, than to enter heaven the
 first of a long train, and noble army of
 martyrs? God has determined otherwise;
 and Simeon is not one of those men who
 think nothing can be well done except
 they are the instruments. John the Baptist
 is already named to the office, which he
 would have undertaken with pleasure, but
 in which he could not have succeeded un-
 less a miracle had first restored him to his
 youth. 'Let then, O Lord, let Joshua the
 'son of Nun lead thy children over Jor-
 'dan; as for Moses, thy servant, he will
 'die here: I have fought a good fight; I
 'have finished my course; I have kept the
 'faith, henceforth there is laid up for me
 'a crown of righteousness. Lord now
 'lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.'

I shall conclude with these very short practical inferences :

Simeon's last words are words of praise and thanksgiving. Rise when we will from the banquet to which Providence has invited us, let us take care, not only to rise satisfied, but grateful. Those, particularly, who seem the favourites of heaven ; who, like happy Benjamin, have been blest with a double portion of its good things, let them remember the generous hand which has lavished them upon them. The remembrance will procure them others, by teaching them the use they are to make of these. Above all, let us profit by the lesson which Simeon gives us, and resign them with decency whenever we are called upon by death. Perhaps we had wished to finish a work which we thought would be useful to mankind ; to see the success of a project
which

which would bring a very considerable increase of wealth and glory to our country; to complete a charitable institution which we feared our heirs might neglect. We have lived, and all these good purposes are effected. We were still desirous to see a few years more, that we might not leave our children fatherless and unprovided for: lo, they are settled to our satisfaction, and we may leave them here without any apprehension.

But do we still linger on fresh pretences? 'Thou fool, this very night shall thy soul be required of thee.' Rich and poor, young and old, let these terrible words be ever present to our minds, so that if the dreadful messenger come this night, this night he may find us prepared to follow him.

SECTION XI

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crease of wealth and glory in the country
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were still desirous to see a few more

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thence and immediately after they
went to enjoin living and we may
have them here without any opposition
God is a just and they are taught that
just as we are in love and as true

Then look, this very night I shall find
a number of them. Rich and poor young
and old, let them be all sent to our pro-
fit in our number to that is the dreadful
arrangement comes this night and night he may
find us prepared to receive him

S E R M O N XII.

JOHN, iv. 24.

*God is a spirit, and they that worship him
must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

S E R M O N XII.

S E R M O N XII.

THAT if there was a difficulty in con-
ceiving an entirely spiritual being, it
ought not to be an objection to our admit-
ting its reality, and that which we regard as
evident, respecting its existence, would re-
spect to undoubted truths of much less impor-
tance; that there in fact is no such difficulty,
is likewise evident from the consciousness a
good man has of the operations of his own
mind, and the conviction he cannot help
feeling, that it may, though he knows not
how, exist independently of his body. Tak-
ing it, therefore, for granted that these two
objections will never stop those who carry
on this

S E R M O N XII.

THAT if there was a difficulty in conceiving an entirely spiritual being, it ought not to be an objection to our admitting its possible existence, appears from the evident deficiencies of our senses with respect to undoubted truths of much less importance; that there in fact is no such difficulty, is likewise evident from the consciousness a good man has of the operations of his own mind, and the conviction he cannot help feeling, that it may, though he knows not how, exist independently of his body. Taking it, therefore, for granted that these two objections will never stop those who carry
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within them the strongest antidote to Scepticism, the desire to be immortal, I shall lay before you very briefly, the principal proofs on which our belief of God's immateriality is grounded; and examine the influence it ought to have upon our conduct.

To prove that God is a spirit, nothing farther is required, than to consider the general properties of matter, and examine whether they are consistent with what we know concerning his other attributes. Matter is visible; but who hath seen Him, and to whom hath His arm been revealed? Matter is divisible and capable of dissolution; but what can bound or annihilate Him, who, enthroned in His majesty before the heavens were created, depends upon Himself alone for the manner, as well as continuance

ance of His existence? Matter is impenetrable, and admits of no co-existent object in the space it occupies; God occupies all space, and pervades every where the works which He has created. Matter finally is, and ever must remain, incapable of motion, thought, and activity, unless actuated upon by a superior impulse. But what resemblance between the tree which falling, withering where the husbandman has cut it down, returns, unconscious, to the ground from whence it was taken, and serves, unknowingly, to produce a second vegetation in it? what resemblance between this and the penetrating self-existent principle that pre-ordained this effect, amidst a multitude of others still infinitely more surprising. To say, therefore, that God is material, is to call Him casual as to existence; complex as to parts; limited, if not totally destitute of happiness and power; a blasphemy of so

complicated a kind, that it never was uttered by a man who had admitted, and understood what he meant when he admitted the existence. The only idea such a person can form, is that of a being, who, uniting his own mental qualities and powers in the highest degree possible, is not limited or restrained in the exercise of them by any of his imperfections ; or, as the Scripture paints Him to us, of one whom he can neither liken or make equal, or compare to any thing ; whom though he will find if he ascend up into heaven, or make his abode in hell, or take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; yet hath no man approached unto, no eye seen, or ear heard Him, enthroned as He is in light unbearable by mortal organs, and sole King eternal, invisible, and immortal.

‘ God is a spirit and they that worship
‘ Him

‘ Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.’ I shall not at present think you otherwise than convinced of your general obligation to worship your Creator; because I reserve this subject to the time, when a review of all His attributes shall have enabled me to draw such arguments from each of them, as, united, will make this impression irresistible. For a reason of the same nature, I shall say nothing of private worship; but after having convinced you of God’s justice in requiring a reasonable service, proceed to state in what that reasonable service consists.

First, then, if God is a spirit, he must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Do you doubt it? Consider your own nature, and what you expect from those who make professions of an attachment towards you. What caught you in the *Ruth*, whom no

law of kindred obliged you to make the partner of your fortunes, and whom so many generally esteemed forcible motives should have induced you to reject? What in the Joseph, whom, spite of your frequent protestations of impartiality and equal love, we have so often seen you led about in the coat of many colours? What in the Jonathan, whose long empty place no honours, no domestic pleasures, no self-inward virtues have been able to supply? Was it in the empty boasts of affection, and duty and solicitude, which successive flatterers have handed down to each other? was it in the heavy forms they have introduced to conceal their own nakedness, by forcing others to appear as naked as themselves? Was it in them, or in the eye that took fire at your enjoyments; in the cheek that grew pale at your anxieties; in the honest hand that never forgot your necessities or your pleasures,

fures, that you recognized the genuine resemblance of yourselves; that you discovered the heart to which your benevolent Maker had appointed you to be kind? And shall half-fashioned clay be more perfect than the potter? Shall the work vie in goodness with the workman? Shall he, whose vanity and infirmities equally force him to feed them with external homage, even at the very instant when he most loudly professes to disclaim it, be more capable of judging what is his due, and more susceptible of feeling what is refused him, than He, who taking in at one view the past, the present, and the future, with all their numerous contingencies and relations, neither wants any additional pleasures, nor can enjoy any but what are unfulfilled as His own bright essence. 'God is a spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth:' that

is, the ceremonial part must be pure; the overt-act sincere, and the consequences of it beneficial to mankind: three characteristics it will be necessary to explain.

First, The ceremonial part of public worship must be pure. That some ceremonies are lawful and expedient, appears equally from a consideration of our own nature, and the positive testimony of the Scriptures. Whatever we shall be capable of in a better state of existence, we perform none of our functions here without the intervention of the senses. They are fellow-labourers with the mind in the most serious of its researches; fellow-labourers which it is compelled to employ, even when it feels itself most dissatisfied with their ministry, or impeded by their sluggishness. If something, therefore, is not allowed for encouraging them in a pursuit in which

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they

they seem least of all to be interested, they will soon despair, and give it over. Hence, in ancient times, the frequent appearance of angelic beings under forms that excited reverence and bespoke attention; hence the noble descriptions of angelic harmony, and the so often repeated invitation to come before God with melody, and the voice of thanksgiving; hence the magnificent construction, as well as the awful and attracting service of the first temple; hence the two august institutions which, substituted by our Saviour himself to the numerous ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation, are not more precious to the mind which reflects upon the blessings of which they are warrants, than they are striking to the eye and ear, that are pure enough to take delight in their majestic simplicity. But if ceremonies are necessary to keep up the attention of sensual beings, we must take care

that, instead of fixing it to, they do not make it wander from, its proper object. For this purpose they must be consistent with morality, which is the great design of all religion, agreeable to the nature and commands of the Deity who is its sole end; and so full of meaning and dignity, that they do not counteract the purpose for which they were intended. The Heathens in general sinned against the first of these restrictions, when, in their processions and other solemn festivals, instituted in honour of gods as vicious as themselves, they introduced ceremonies so subversive of morality, that every act of religion was a step towards living ill, instead of an engagement to live well. The Roman Catholics fall visibly under the second; and may it not, without a breach of that Christian charity, which in this place at least it becomes us to be very cautious how we violate; may it not

be

be said of some of our modern enthusiasts, that they are equally to be censured for their forgetfulness of the third; when, with forced gestures and unnatural expressions of piety and contrition, they discourse on subjects too abstruse for their own comprehension, and, like the priests of Baal, rather seem intent on waking the Divinity, than desirous to conciliate Him by the sincerity of their professions.

For, secondly, God is a spirit, and they that worship must be sincere in the overt-act of worship which they perform. Man is pleased with flattery and adulation; either because he knows not that the false heart has no fellowship in the words of the tongue, or because his imperfect nature renders him unable to resist the poison, even when he is acquainted with its noxious tendency; or because he imagines that

other men may be dupes, though he is not, and that, somehow or other, his purposes of vanity and self-importance will be answered by suffering himself to be deceived. God is too wise to be cheated by false homage; too sensible of His own happiness, to derive any additional pleasure from being reminded of it, and too independently perfect, to be affected by any light in which the adoration of those whom He has made can place him. When, therefore, you prepare to enter these gates, you must take care to feel what you profess, and to be convinced of what you acknowledge. When you praise God for His great glory, you must be conscious that you have attended to the proofs which manifest it; when you thank Him for His mercies, you must be certain that you have not looked upon them as common operations of nature; when you promise to serve Him in holiness
and

and righteousness all the days of your life, you must esteem it a promise which is to influence every action of your lives; not like those who, with not a doubt at present of the existence of their Maker, will suffer the first boisterous and unruly railer, who starts an objection they have not heard answered, to seduce them from their faith; not like those who will break the Sabbath before they sleep, which they but this morning took a fresh obligation to observe; not like those whose now closed lips will scarce open again but in imprecations and injurious appeals to that Being; who, except upon the most solemn occasions, has forbidden them to use any other asseverations than the simplest forms of common conversation.

But this is not all; for, thirdly, and lastly, True worship is imitative worship. The only unerring way you have of shewing
your

your respect for a valuable character, is to make it the model of your own: as this is the sole criterion which sensible men make use of in estimating the protestations you make them, so it is the one God has established for yourself, and those around you, to know whether you are worshippers in spirit and in truth. Cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow: else who hath required this of you to appear before me, and to tread my courts? What imports it to the Divinity, that you yield to the proofs of His existence, if you throw a stumbling-block in the way of your weak brother, who cannot conceive how any thing so hard, and so insensible as you, can have issued from the hands of infinite Benevolence? What can the sincerest expressions of praise and thanksgiving for his mercies towards you; what

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what can they avail in His sight, if they reach His throne with the cries of those who lay before Him your ingratitude or injustice? Dare you thank Him for having taught you His word; and yet let your children live in ignorance of it? Dare you praise Him for having given you reason, and yet indulge pleasures which first disgrace, and then destroy it? This, in short, is the law and the prophets; this the unfailing mark which accompanies true devotion; this the text which parents ought to teach and examine their children in from their earliest infancy; the text by which we ought to try all our friends, the winning flatteries our friends utter in the warmest moments of their affection; all we are tempted to think of ourselves, when some transient act of charity or good-nature has raised us in our own estimation. By their works shall you know them here; by their
works

works shall you distinguish them hereafter: by this you shall know that they are his disciples, if they are firm, steadfast and immoveable in the path, which he has trod before them.

I shall conclude with two characteristics of imitative worship, to which it becomes us to be particularly attentive.

Nothing is more contrary, either to the general spirit of Christianity, or to those precepts of humanity and toleration which are diffused throughout the liturgy, and ought always to be recommended from the pulpit, than expressions of abhorrence and contempt for those who differ from us. When, therefore, thou returnest from the altar, when, in pursuit of the ordinances of God, thou hast been to lay thy offering before thy Maker, and meetest the Samaritan,

tan, thy brother, returning from the mountain of Gerizim, let it be with a smile upon thy face, that he is so near the true service of the living God; if, as some mistaken men amongst them are said to do, if he rebuke thee, bless him; if he evil-entreat thee, evil-entreat him not again: I tell thee, by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head; and, what is infinitely desirable, and will prove infinitely honourable to thee, perhaps win him over to thy persuasion, by the difference he will observe between thy tenets and his own.

Secondly, There is no time, except, perhaps, that in which we are going to waste what ought to provide for the exigencies of our families, in trifling and not always even lawful pleasures; there is no time in which the poor attack us to such advantage, as when we are returning from the mansions

mansions of the common Father. If ever it is honourable to let the heart do its office unrestrained by the dictates of the understanding; if ever it is lawful to forget the common suggestions of prudence; if ever it is pardonable to take even some of the children's meat and throw it to those who are not strictly of the household; it is, when we come from meditating on infinitely greater charities than it is possible we should shew each other. This they know who are the commonest objects of our charity, and it is on this principle that they stand incessantly round the temple. The measure you are to observe with them it becomes not me to determine; but whatever measure you observe with them, you will remember that now is the hour, for the widow who asks to be heard; for the child who petitions to be forgiven; for the debtor to be indulged, who only

wishes

wishes to be released, that he may have it in his power to discharge his obligation : without these dispositions, though, like that of impious Cain, your offering has been brought to the altar, think not that it has been accepted by your Maker, or that He has sent down the fire from heaven in token of his acceptance. But if you feel these generous, these humane sentiments rising within your breasts ; if you are determined to offer a peace-offering as soon as you reach the place of your dwelling, then be assured too, that He who prefers one such act to the most regular attendance without it, has looked with pleasure on your sacrifice, that He has been present in a more peculiar manner at it ; that He will afford you a quick and continually increasing sensation ; that the having nothing to reproach himself with is the greatest blessing a human creature can enjoy ; that He will strengthen, and
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render you still more and more superior to temptation; in short, that He sends you justified from hence; and will receive you justified at the resurrection of the just.

S E R M O N XIII.

[Preached at Paris, the first Fast-day immediately after the evacuation of Long-Island, and the taking of New-York.]

ISAIAH, v. 25.

*For all this his anger is not turned away, but
his hand is stretched out still.*

S E R M O N XIII.

I HAVE been led to the choice of these words, by the thought that the first idea of many men would be, to look upon the present solemnity as ill-timed: and such, indeed, it must be confessed have been hitherto the successes of a war no sooner seriously begun, than it seems to be almost finished; such the manifestation of wisdom, alacrity, and spirit, as well as the consequent glory they have regained us amongst those who, when men rose up against us, thought they would have swallowed us up quick, that a superficial observer might be led to imagine we were come together,

not to supplicate the Lord to be on our side, but to thank him for having been so; not to deprecate national judgment, ready to be poured down upon us, but to celebrate national advantages, and exult together in a power and prosperity never equalled in the annals of the nation.

But, alas! he must, indeed, be a very superficial observer, and little skilled in the signs of times, who allows himself to reason after this manner; when how high soever our vanity may be raised on some accounts, there is so much to lower it, and persuade us, ‘that for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.’

It would be needless to take up much of your time in shewing how little room we can have for confidence on a religious account: for if it be the uniform language
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of Scripture, that God *is* the ruler of the world, and that He *does* set up, and pull down kingdoms according as they acknowledge or deny His power and providence, what can be the expectations of a people, amongst whom the name of religion is still kept up, but where religion itself seems almost as much banished, as if it was so by authority? For let us not be deceived by words and forms, and on this day at least (called and ordered as we are from the throne to speak it) let the truth be spoken, and also be heard, without dissimulation. What is it with which the clergy and laity mutually reproach each other? What is it with which the deists on the one side, and enthusiasts on the other, reproach us all? Is it not that the best of us, and those apparently the best convinced, do not in fact believe Christianity, but substitute an imperfect kind of natural religion to it, which fails

them, whenever their passions or interest prompt them to do like the rest of the world: is it not that a great number of others, who on every account are bound to oppose the corruption, either partake of it themselves (which, indeed, would be the height of shame, were it not that great abuses or neglects in national education make that to be thought only indolence and want of free thought and magnanimity in one age, which in another would be the excess of guilt and shame), or, when they do not partake of it, neglect to do their utmost to stop it? Does any body think this sounds harsh? let me then ask them to recollect how often they hear the great name of God (which the illustrious Boyle never uttered without expressions of reverence) uttered even in the most solemn deliberations

tions in parliament, for purposes of levity. Who has spirit enough to avow, in common conversation, that he makes this tremendous and awful Being the object of his fear, and looks up to him for success in what he undertakes? Who allots a part of his time to the serious information of himself and his family in the doctrines and evidence of the Gospel? In what family is private worship established, and what individual practises either abstinence at any time, or more particular abstinence at those periods set apart for recollection and devotion? Whether these things would be important or not in themselves, were they not commanded, is another question; but that they are the Christianity of the Gospel, of the primitive Christians, of Bacon, Boyle, Newton, and Locke; of those who of other persuasions, in other instances defective, set us a disgraceful example

ample in this, is most certain ; but whilst our practice is so different (and that it is so, I once more appeal to the most religious amongst yourselves, to what you are conscious of amongst the most religious of your acquaintance), is it possible, though it be still our duty to implore his protection—I repeat, is it possible seriously to think God either does, or ever will again, lead our armies to battle ? May we not rather fear, that high as our present hopes are, and founded as our expectations may seem, of our city's being once more at unity with itself, there may be a reverse preparing, and that we have been raised thus high, only to astonish and instruct the world, by a fall proportionate to our ingratitude : or if the blow is still put off, and a nation, not the more innocent, though it be what I am afraid we must confess it, more regular in these respects, is not destined to triumph over us, still is the decree gone forth,

forth, and by some means or other will be executed upon us.

For, in the second place, as I hinted before, this is not a barely religious speculation, and were there no God who ruled the world, an attentive observer would form the same conclusion on this point as a believer. The world has lasted long enough, for the symptoms which denote the fall of empires, to be as well-known, as those which announce the ruin of private families; nor can either a gloomy man, or a sanguine one, impose on us in this respect, since there is still the testimony of history to appeal to from them both. Deceived in the time, indeed, we may be, since this is determined by second causes, which are delayed or hastened as it seems good to the Governor of the earth; but when has it ever happened that such has been the condition

dition of any people, and the total ruin of that people did not take place? A forgetfulness of their own dignity, and a contempt for themselves, followed by a consequent contempt and irreverence of them in all ranks and all orders; every rank, and every order, notwithstanding, pressing upon that above it, and endeavouring to emulate, at least in vice and folly, the pride substituted to patrician dignity, which repels, and will not suffer any other approach. Natural pleasures, and their usual attendants, natural occupations, and natural cares, almost universally banished; and, instead of them, amusements, many of them criminal, almost all senseless, and betraying their insufficiency by their numbers, variety, and quick succession. These, again, productive of excesses which no fortunes or tempers will bear, and so preparing the minds for the equally baleful extremes of faction and

corruption: the fatal effects of these shewing themselves in every place, and in every way; at home, by a contempt of all authority, a suspension of all characters, a relaxation in all ties; abroad, by great marks of ignominy which brand the name of the nation, and will brand it, whatever be the successes of the war, both with foreigners and the latest posterity. All (which is the worst of all), all these things, acknowledged, felt, sometimes attempted to be redressed, but in general not thought of, laughed at, made the subject of pleasantries only, or the engines which the equally guilty use, in the destruction of each other. I do ask again, when were all these marks seen upon any nation, and that nation not ripe for destruction? If it has ever been so, and the constitution of the human body, and human mind, arguments which the rational man will not attempt to elude, as he thinks
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he may those drawn from schools of divinity, prove that it must be so; what have we to reply, why we should not fill up the number, and be held out to posterity as the Greek and Roman republics are to us? They had courage; they excelled in the ingenuous, and, as far as they were then known, in the mechanic arts, in navigation and commerce: but neither the ingenuous arts, nor courage, nor commerce protected them from Philip and Cæsar; for the foundations of all these things were shaken, and the arts by which they had been acquired were forgotten; and when the same causes meet, the same effects must be produced, though how the catastrophe will be brought about, may not be easy to ascertain; whether the barrier to despotism, supposed to exist in the interest the legislative power has in not being corrupted beyond a certain degree, will be overcome by

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by a future ambitious and cunning prince, assisted by the increasing unruliness of the people, or the daring spirit of faction and sedition meeting with the leaders it has hitherto missed, and adding courage to its brutality, shall again force us into despotism, through all the horrors of anarchy and popular tyranny; or what indeed is more to be apprehended, the empire, weakened alike in every part, will bend alike in every part to foreign force; this is in His hands, whose ministers these vengeance are, and who directs them as he sees fit. One thing only we may venture to pronounce, and that is, that none of the external securities we confide in, are such as may reasonably fill us with that degree of pride and self-complacency, with which we are apt to look to them. Military courage and honour, it is true, still subsist among us, nor, though the principle on which they subsist be not
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that which is calculated to give them the greatest stability, has it hitherto received any considerable shock; but as what has not happened hitherto may be dreaded, from the not to be dissembled corruption in every other order of the state (might I add, without being more uncharitable than becomes this place, from the part in the quarrel taken by some of that order itself?) so it is a most alarming consideration, that when these virtues, the last which ever do forsake a brave people, have once begun to give way, it is then too late to seek for refuge against the approaching ruin; the constitution must fall with them. Nor is it better secured by the interests other powers are supposed to have in keeping it up, or by the divisions and jealousies amongst themselves, which do not suffer them to avail themselves of our distress: these are accidental, and remote causes, which history teaches

teaches us yield every day to the appearance of present interest, or what is still more impetuous, to the dictates of present passion. Indeed that this is likely to be the case in the present moment, I neither can believe, in opposition to appearances which strongly prove the contrary, nor if I could, would my duty allow me to declare. One thing however I may declare (because, from whatever cause, it is too apparent throughout every nation of Europe), and this is, that they have all ceased to reverence those as individuals, whom, as long as men are men, most of them will never cease to envy and hate as a people; and how far this may hereafter contribute to our ruin by alienating some, and cooling the zeal of others; how far necessarily the objects of hatred for institutes which not only reproach, but restrain our neighbours, we may become objects of contempt, for having abandoned them

them ourselves—as it is rather a political, than a religious speculation, I shall leave for the present.

And is there one among you, who sees and confesses these things, and yet is not moved by them to something besides a bare confession that they are so? Is there one so lost to what had formerly such weight upon popular assemblies, the future grandeur of his country, the state of his descendants, as to remain in indifference, because the evil is not likely to happen in his time? No, surely, if we believe the impatience you express for the event, or the fears which filled you when it was believed it might be fatal; but remember, that were America reunited to the empire to-morrow; were the conquests in India secured upon the only basis that can secure them, the basis of equity, moderation, and justice; were

were every other blessing to be poured in upon us, and our empire to pass its present bounds, as much as it has already passed the bounds apparently assigned it by nature; it is the restoration of manners alone, and, of course (since they cannot be restored by any other way), the vigorous exertion of every individual to restore them, that can truly make these blessings our own, and secure them to our posterity. Those who are convinced of these truths, will bear with the preacher a little longer, whilst he endeavours to remind each order, what these manners were, and to beg their concurrence in the revival of them.

To the great it may be recommended, that they would imitate, or excel (since if it is in any thing that they can excel them it is in this) their ancestors in breaking off

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those destructive associations, which, by whatever names distinguished, forasmuch as they are repugnant to the plain dictates of virtue, are really associations of vice, and have henceforth no party but that of their country; that not only in parliament, but in their respective counties, they would take an active part in the support of government and good manners, which never can be supported, unless the first people will engage in it; that they would restrain as well their own excessive fondness, as their now almost exclusive encouragement towards the professors of those arts, which adorn empire when they hold the lower place, but corrupt it when they become the principal occupation; that above all, called this day by an act of their own, and of the prince they love, to a public profession of their dependence

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ance on Heaven, they would be uniform and active in inculcating respect to an authority so essential to the preservation of their own, mindful (what no order of men ought to know better, and feel more than themselves) that no prevalence of fashion has prescription against virtue, and that it is he who calls back, and not he who follows a multitude to do wrong, that deserves to govern, and be looked up to by them.

The second order may be summoned to remember from whence they sprung, and what was the way of life that raised their ancestors to the independence they inherit; not, of course, to affect a mode of living, which neither can become, or truly please them; not to want to forget the disadvantages of birth and station, since the one party is as eager to mark, as the other to

conceal it in the dissipations of opulence; not, above all, instead of the homely virtue of Englishmen, the sense, the good-nature, the modesty, the sound and true learning, which ought to distinguish their children of both sexes, to give them the splendid vices of another people: but, indeed, this is a subject that concerns us all, since it is either upon the completion of our education, if it is good, or its reformation, if it is faulty, that all must finally depend. Among many other things, I feel, but have not time to mention, how far an early imitation of manners, which, were they not confessedly the most corrupt, are (and may they ever remain so) the most alien from ours; how far the immense stress now laid on accomplishments, which, necessary to no class of people, are detrimental, at least if the English writers who once guided our education are to be believed, to all but the
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very first ; how far especially the risking in foreign seminaries (and that there is a risk, not only the practice of the adversaries of our faith, so different in these respects from ours, but visible marks in most of those who come from thence, demonstrate)—how far the risking, for any accomplishments, what is infinitely more valuable to us as Christians and Englishmen—these things, once more, how far justifiable, I rather hint than determine: persuaded as to myself, that in that appointment of our legislature, which, combined with the form of our government, never suffers us to be restrained enough, and sets us free when we have most need of restraint; in this, and in the general custom and mode of foreign travel, which increases the mischief, and renders it remediless, will the greatest part of the evil be found: there it is, and there, if ever, must the cure be begun.

To the inferior orders, I can only speak the language of the Gospel of the day: Fear God, honour the king, honour all men to whom honour is due; exert your constitutional privileges with integrity, whenever you are called upon to exert them. Those who are the loudest to complain of their being violated, are not always those who exert them with the most integrity. Upon other occasions return to that reverence for, and confidence in, your superiors, which I am neither afraid nor ashamed to say, the Gospel does almost implicitly demand from people in your sphere; always remembering, that as the incapacity you confess in other things will shew you how unable you are to judge, either of the unavoidable encroachments of government, or the art of those who want to govern: so your own history, and in some respects the history of your own times, may con-

vince you, that it is not a change in your circumstances which is commonly either looked for, or produced by the latter. Indeed, the lower members of a trading nation have this farther reason to eat their bread in quietness, that they may hurt themselves, or be hurt by the general luxury they partake in, but that no administration can effectually hurt them, since it is upon their labours, labours incompatible with oppression, every administration must depend; at least till things are in the state which they are not like to be, whilst no individual among you has a right to complain that his person has been imprisoned, his revenue forced from him, or civil justice denied him; but, on the contrary, you have seen many laws take place, the purport of which could only be to increase your security, both from the crown, and your superiors.

But to conclude. These alterations may, and they only can, turn the anger of the Lord away from us : whether they will or no, or the decree be already gone forth, is only known to Him, who is, and will be King, let the earth be never so unquiet ; but whatever he has decreed to do with us, it is our duty, on this day of humiliation and prayer, to strive with him, if haply he may still return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him. Not unto ourselves, therefore, O Lord, not unto ourselves, but unto thy protection ; not unto our fleets and armies, but to thy loving kindness and great mercies, we this day commit our concerns : if not for the righteous still to be seen among us, for those establishments and that taste for science, which leads to knowledge of thy name ; for that toleration we have learned from thy blessed Son ; for that general spirit of benevolence, not in-
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tirely owing to our riches, not intirely derived from our government, but learned in the religion of thy Son ; for the righteousness with which, notwithstanding the confusion of face which belongs to us on so many accounts, the cause of the orphan and widow is still judged amongst us. If not for these, O Lord, yet for thy own great name, for the vineyard thou thyself hast planted, and made so glorious to thyself ; for the statutes and judgments which have brought thee so nigh to us : O Lord hear ; O Lord forgive ; O Lord hearken and do. The Lord blefs us, and keep us ; the Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace : peace now, and for evermore.

SERMON

the law to our riches, not merely de-
rived from our government but learned in
the religion of the Son; for the right-
ous law which, notwithstanding the
condition of law, which belongs to us on
the one hand, the cause of the orphan
and widow is still judged amongst us. If
not for these, O Lord, yet for thy own
great name, for the glory and honour
of thy name, and for the glory of thy
name, O Lord, for ever; O Lord, hear
us, and do. The Lord bids us, and keep us;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon us,
and give us peace, peace now, and for ever.

S E R M O N XIV.

PROVERBS, ix. 10.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom : and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.

S E R M O N XIV.

WE all naturally desire happiness ; we all know that obtaining it greatly depends on a wise choice of our conduct in life, and yet very few examine with any care the conduct which is likeliest to procure us the happiness which we seek. The lively part of the world, hurried along by a giddy tumult of passions and fancies, venture, with a most intrepid gaiety of heart, on whatever looks pleasing to them, and are in too much haste for present gratifications ever to stop and think of consequences either to others or themselves. The good-natured and flexible are easily drawn to follow

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low the more active and enterprising of their acquaintance, and the thoughtless and indolent find it unspeakably the least trouble to let themselves be borne along by the tide of custom and fashion, just as it flows and ebbs by turns. Others there are who, a little more considerate, take a different course, yet often scarce a better, and sometimes a worse. They despise the weakness of being caught with every bait of present pleasure, or abandoning their lives to the direction of mere chance, but follow with great attention, art, and industry, what the world calls their interest. But this being their only view, the disappointed (and more or less all are disappointed) are miserable. The small remainder who seem to attain their wishes, betray, under the fairest shew of outward prosperity, evident tokens that they have very little inward enjoyment to compensate for the many
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and long anxieties that usually precede. Few things ever come up to what they at first promised; and such as do fall below it very soon, leaving the mind at best languid and unsatisfied. But if such persons have taken, as they commonly do take, forbidden ways, amongst others, to their ends, then additional uneasinesses crowd in upon them; painful reflections on their past behaviour; solicitous apprehensions of what may follow both here and hereafter. For there is deeply rooted in the heart of man an inbred sense of right and wrong; which, however heedlessly overlooked, or studiously suppressed by the gay or busy part of the world, will, from time to time, make them both feel that it hath the justest authority to govern all that we do, as well as power to reward with the truest consolation, and punish with the acutest remorse.

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Others, therefore, see the absolute necessity of bringing virtue and duty into the account, when they deliberate concerning the behaviour that leads to happiness. And were the regard which they pay to these universal and uniform, their happiness would be as complete as human nature and circumstances will admit. But too often they who practise conscientiously some duties, with strange inconsistency utterly despise others; and, which is stranger yet, many who profess the most general concern for moral obligations, quite forget the first and strongest of them all, reverence towards Him who made us. Some affect to set up virtue in opposition to piety, and would be thought desirous to serve the former, by depreciating the latter. Others, more upon their guard, yet explain themselves freely on all occasions to allow nothing further than this, that religion may be of use

use to keep the bulk of mankind in order ; not reflecting, that the upper part have still greater need of its restraints ; and that whenever it comes to be spoken of as only an instrument of policy, it will be no longer so much as that. But lighter minds run wilder lengths by far, and, absolutely indifferent what harm may come of it, perpetually treat all sacred subjects, as if freedom of thought about them consisted in pouring the utmost contempt upon them that was possible.

Yet perhaps very few, if any of these, would they consult their hearts honestly, do so much as imagine they have any reason to doubt but a world, so visibly full of beautiful order and gracious design, must have been first formed, and be still governed, by a most powerful, intelligent and beneficent cause. This, the least degree of con-

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sideration,

fideration, how else the frame of things could be what it is, will sufficiently shew; and every advance in the knowledge of nature makes the proof in proportion fuller and more obvious. If, then, there exists a Sovereign of the universe, almighty, and allwise, it cannot be a matter that we are unconcerned in. He, by whose pleasure we are, and according to whose determinations since, we are as we are; and may be happy or miserable, is not a being unrelated to us. While he continually superintends every thing else on this earth with the exactest care, it is not to be supposed that he will ever neglect the worthiest object which it presents to His view, the affections and behaviour of his rational creatures. He must expect every thing to act as its nature requires. Having distinguished ours with the knowledge of Himself; of what He is; of the laws by which

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He acts, He cannot have left it in our choice to lay Him aside out of our thoughts as if we knew Him not, but must have expected that we should pay Him those regards which are His due. The first of these, and the foundation of all the rest, is a proper temperature of fear and love, two affections which ought never to be separated in thinking of God ; and, therefore, whichever is expressed implies the other. The text hath mentioned only fear ; but evidently means that kind which a child feels towards a wise and good parent ; which the Psalmist had in his thoughts when he said, ' There is mercy with Thee, therefore Thou shalt be feared.' That practising this, is the true wisdom of man, I shall proceed to shew you distinctly, by considering its influence,

First, On the conduct; and,

Secondly, On the enjoyment of our lives.

First, On our conduct.

Some, indeed, mistake the dictates of sensuality and vanity, for those of reason; presume to speak of the Author of our nature, as if, by giving us the several inclinations belonging to it, he had warranted the unrestrained indulgence of them all. But a little reflection will easily confute so wild an imagination, and shew us with how great propriety the wise king hath said, that the knowledge of the Holy is understanding. He who is perfectly righteous and holy himself, must have regard to what is right and fit in others. He who hath provided with such fatherly care for the common good of us all, can never leave us at liberty

liberty to defeat His purpose, by injuring and corrupting one another, and filling His world with confusion and misery at our pleasure. He hath not planted in us passions, affections, and appetites, to grow up wild as accident directs, but to be diligently superintended, weeded, and pruned, and each confined to its proper bounds. He hath not endued us with a principle of conscience to be overborne by resentments and interests, drowned in sensual gratifications, led captive by fashions and fancies, but to be cultivated and improved, and then obeyed as the guide through life. Its authority is derived from Him, and its judgment will be finally confirmed by His. To complete the assurance given by nature of these great truths, express revelation from above hath given us undeniable evidence that universal virtue is God's law, and eternal happiness or misery its sanctions. Now what can possibly in-

fluence men like such a motive so enforced; and how weakly must they judge, or how ill must they mean, who would abandon so solid a foundation of right behaviour, to lay the stress of so important a building on another!

It would be unjust and unwise to reject the smallest inducement to any part of goodness, for we greatly need every one that we can have. But it is extremely requisite to observe where our chief security lies, and place our chief trust there. The reasonableness, the dignity, the beauty of virtue are doubtless natural, and ought to be strong recommendations of it. But how faint impressions do they make on the ignorant and slow apprehension; on minds agitated with passions, or hardened in sins! how soon do such impressions, if single and unsupported, fade away out of all

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all minds, or dwindle into mere speculation amidst the temptations of a bad world, the allurements of sense, the treacheries of a deceitful heart ! Again, the temporal advantages of virtue, and bad effects of wickedness, ordinarily speaking, are weighty arguments ; but still, how often doth temporal prosperity act with great power in opposition to the interests of virtue !

The fear of God is one universal motive operating on the mind of every person, extending to the practice of every duty, including at once every moral disposition of heart, and every prudent regard to our own good. The energy of this principle, duly cherished in the mind, is sufficient to check the strongest passions, curb the most extravagant levity of spirit, overbalance the greatest temporal advantage, and make whatever is our duty appear in the strongest

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light to be our interest. Besides this, the consciousness of having such a witness to each action and purpose, should powerfully incline us to be very composed and moderate in every proceeding, very mild and reasonable towards every person. Reverence of God's authority will make us fear to injure the meanest of our fellow-creatures, since even he is under the protection of the Almighty, and hope of sharing in his bounty will teach us to imitate it by the tenderest exercise of humanity and compassion.

Let us then inquire, secondly, What effect the fear of God must have on the enjoyment of our lives?

Unquestionably it will make bad people uneasy; but then it is both for the world's good and their own that they should be so. It is not their thinking of their condition
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that makes it a dreadful one ; the less they feel it, the worse it is ; and feeling it to any purpose will be the happiest thing possible for them. Farther, this fear doubtless restrains persons from dissolute pleasures and dishonourable means of obtaining profit, power, and advancement. But so doth virtue ; so, for the most part, doth common prudence. Farther still, we must own it gives a peculiar seriousness and awe to the mind of man ; but we have need to be kept in awe by a sense of God's parental authority, and without it should quickly become ungovernable, mischievous, and wretched. He requires us not in the least to be gloomy and comfortless, or full of terrors whilst we mean to do well, but freely permits us the cheerfullest use of all our faculties that is consistent with innocence, and with making improvement in goodness our chief care, as it will be our chief felicity.

And

And if the thought of Him doth moderate the liveliness of over-gay dispositions, it prevents, by so doing, many great evils into which they would otherwise hurry us, and fills us with much more inward and deep-felt satisfactions, than those light and trifling ones, that only play upon the surface of an inconsiderate mind. Or did that composure which piety requires lessen our enjoyments for a time, yet being what our state on earth, which is in many respects a serious one, demands ; if we are wise, we shall gladly conform ourselves to the condition which God has placed us in, and trust to Him that the consequences will be happy.

Such, indeed, will every one who makes the trial soon find them. What pleasure can be greater, than a full persuasion that our behaviour is approved by Him who knows our hearts, and will reward, with his acceptance,

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ance, whatever we do right? The world is generally a negligent spectator, and too often an unfair interpreter of the best actions. But the recollection that God looks on with approbation, sets us above the censure of men, and even their applause.

Then, as to the sufferings of this life, which often make up a great share of it, religion entirely prevents many of them, by withholding us from the sins and follies that bring them on, and it wonderfully diminishes the rest, by loosening our attachments to what we must expect to be disappointed in, or separated from. Still what is naturally painful must be felt so; but the insupportable part of every affliction is taken away, when we consider it as ordered by Him, whose right to dispose of us we acknowledge, and of whose kind intentions to us we may always be sure.

Such,

Such, then, is the good influence of the fear of God; and his genuine fear can have no bad one. Reverence of a wise and holy Being will never mislead men into any thing wicked or weak. False religion, indeed, may do both; and so may false notions of friendship or virtue, or any other valuable quality; but this was never thought an argument, in any case besides, against being governed by the true, neither ought it in the present. God must be worshipped by us in spirit and in truth, let others worship him as wrongly as they will; and his laws must be obeyed, let ever so many mistake errors of their own for such. The danger of superstition is a very powerful reason why religious belief and practice should be watched over and directed right; but cannot possibly be a reason why dissolute profaneness should be encouraged or suffered. Let rational piety be thoroughly
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established, and superstition falls of course. But if the former be rooted out, the latter will certainly grow up in its place. There is a natural bent in human minds to believe and respect an invisible power, and if it be turned aside from pointing in a proper manner towards its proper object, it will soon acquire some other direction, probably an absurd and pernicious one. Infidelity promises great freedom and enjoyment of life, but in fact it proves, in proportion as it prevails, a state of madness and confusion; of perpetual danger, from others; of discomfort and desperate resolutions within men's own breasts; and therefore, after some trial of it, they will eagerly run away from it into the opposite extreme.

True religion, then, being of such importance, there are some things which may justly be expected of mankind in its favour.

First,

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First, That they who have not yet searched into the grounds of it, should not take upon them to treat it with scorn or even disregard. What so deeply concerns all men, and what the wisest and most considerate of men have lived and died in the firm belief of, ought not surely to be thrown aside on hearing only a few superficial objections and ludicrous turns of words to its disadvantage. There needs much more than this to confute it, and therefore, whoever with little reading, and little thought, finds much inclination to disbelieve, should learn to suspect himself instead of his creed, and be modest in proportion to his ignorance of the subject.

Secondly, It may be expected also, that they who profess to examine, do it fairly. Most men will be backward to confess that they wish against religion, because it is

confessing that they have reason to fear if
 the universe be well governed. But each
 ought to think well, whether this be not
 secretly his case, and remove the prepos-
 session of his bad life, before he pretends to
 be an upright judge. After that, if he finds
 difficulties, let him remember, that they are
 to be found in every thing, and yet some-
 thing must be true. If he meets not with
 the sort or the degree of evidence that he
 looked for, let him recollect, that a fair
 mind will be satisfied with any that turns
 the scale. If he doubts of some points, let
 him still hold fast those which remain un-
 doubted, and preserve that respect for re-
 ligion in general, which will prove the best
 guide to his understanding in every parti-
 cular part of it. Nay, were it possible to
 doubt only of the whole; yet since doubt
 is not certainty, his practice, however,
 should be on the safer side; or at least, if he
 sees,

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fees, as one should think he must, that scepticism and infidelity will destroy the chief comfort of the good, endanger the virtue of all, and weaken the bonds of civil society; never let the vanity of propagating his notions tempt him to be the author or promoter of so dreadful a mischief to human kind. But,

Thirdly, The last and most important thing of all is, that they who are so happy as to believe, should secure and complete their happiness by what alone can do it, a suitable behaviour. Too often the contrary course is taken; and many who had once some regard for religion, but unhappily accompanied with vicious indulgences, force themselves to throw it off, that they may sin undisturbed. But let no one imagine that denying God will make the least amends for disobeying him; or that stifling

fling our convictions, can give any true peace, which is only to be had by enforcing them home on our hearts, and conforming our lives to them. This we have all need to do with the utmost care, amidst so many, so powerful, and so sudden temptations to the contrary. And as the reverence of our heavenly Father is the most effectual preservative, we ought to keep up that in its full strength, by frequently thinking of Him, and praying to Him. How entirely the exercises of devotion are laid aside by some, and with what indifference, and even contempt, a mere outward shew of them now and then is just retained by others who yet call themselves Christians, too many of you, I fear, know too well; and it furnishes matter of melancholy reflection, not only to every pious, but every prudent mind. For good men must feel

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that the regard due to God is a most inward, constant, and awful one; and wise men must surely perceive, that neither can the common welfare be preserved without morals, nor morals without religion, nor religion without worship; private worship, to strengthen our own sense of duty; and public worship, to spread it among others. On all accounts, therefore, it is our most important concern to cultivate and express the affections of piety which are, indeed, the noblest movements of our souls towards the worthiest object, towards the attainment of the most blessed end; and to awaken ourselves from the remissness into which we are apt to fall on this head, beyond others, by reminding our hearts often that God is present, and a future state soon will be so, and how soon to any of us, none can tell. May we all resolve, from
this

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this moment, to strive earnestly for a happy share in it, through faith in the merits of our Redeemer; and a right use of the suggestions of the Divine Spirit.

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this moment, to give solemnity for a moment
there in it, through this in the name of
our Redeemer; and a right use of the
suggestions of the Divine Spirit.

R M O N XV

And have we fellowship with the world?
yea, of course, but in a different sense.

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EPHESIANS, v. 11.

*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful
works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

S E R M O N X V

S E R M O N X V

THESE THINGS BEING NOW
SAID, WE COME TO THE
OLD TRUTH, THAT THE
MORE DIFFICULT THE
TO BEING, THE MORE
BUT MANY NEW THINGS
AND BEING, THE MORE
LEAVING OUT, AS TO THE
GIVING OUT, AS TO THE
OUR OWN GRANTING, AS
THE LAST OF THE
PRINCIPALLY, AS TO
OUR OWN, AS TO
THROUGH, AS TO

S E R M O N XV.

THE prevalence of impiety and immorality in the world, hath not only made the original duties of mankind more difficult by increasing the temptation to transgress them, but added to their number many new obligations of great importance, relating partly to the concern of preserving ourselves ; partly to the charity of guarding others from the general infection. Our own preservation is, doubtless, to be the first object of our attention, as we are primarily intrusted with, and answerable for our own persons, and have by nature the strongest solicitude for our own happiness.

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But

But zeal for that of our fellow-creatures ought certainly to fill the second place in our breast, and is a duty much too little regarded even by the good. As, however, every one is by no means qualified to use every method for doing this, the Apostle hath given room, in his text, for the treating them all, by mentioning the lowest instance of due care in this respect; 'having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness;' and the highest 'reproving them.'

The first of these, barely not partaking in a bad action, may seem scarce doing any thing for the opposite cause. And yet, as the common practice of sin is the principal plea in its favour, it is of great consequence to shew that the practice is not universal; that there are still persons left who fear God, and love his laws; who abhor an unworthy deed, and despise a criminal pleasure.

sure. Almost every one may do some good in this way, and possibly far more than he imagines, merely by maintaining openly an uniform tenor of pious and moral behaviour, without taking any pains to call the attention of mankind to it. But the rich, the noble, the powerful, the learned, the ingenious, the admired; those especially in whom several of these advantages unite, may barely, by manifesting themselves to be such as they ought, each of them singly reform or preserve multitudes of their inferiors, and a number of them combined, oppose and put to flight the reigning vices of the age in which they live.

After exhibiting a pattern of goodness in ourselves, our next care should be to promote, in a proper manner, on all fit occasions, the esteem of whatever is good in others. The generality attend not enough to moral

excellencies, and too often consider them in a wrong point of view, by which means they overlook, or sometimes conceive prejudices against what they would else honour and be proud to imitate. Therefore, whenever favourable opportunities present themselves, they should be instantly seized, and the rightness, the loveliness, the beneficial fruits of each virtue, shewn to such as are not yet sufficiently sensible of them; the ridicule which hath been unjustly thrown on some duties, taken off, and the misrepresentations which have rendered them contemptible, rectified; the plea of excessive severity urged against others, confuted, and the real difficulties of practising them proved to be counterbalanced by the shortness of its continuance, and the blessed effects of overcoming it. At the same time we should exemplify these truths, whenever we can, in the characters of the worthy,

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worthy, on whom we should always be endeavouring to turn the eyes of our acquaintance; to place them and their actions in an advantageous light; to vindicate them from aspersions; to convince as many as possible how much more valuable and conducive, both to private and public welfare, a religious and honest principle is, than the most shining and envied accomplishments, when separated from it. We should study to cherish and recommend such as are eminent for their merit, to support and prefer their interests, to make them known and acceptable one to another, and forward among them a general union, that above all things would gain them respect and success. But,

Whilst we are thus labouring to encourage virtue and religion, we must be extremely cautious that we obstruct not our
own

own work by favouring any sort of wickedness ; that we never patronize, for the sake of our own gratification, what may probably tempt unguarded innocence into sin, or furnish the ill-inclined with the means of committing it ; that we contribute not to raise any bad, or even suspicious person, to the condition of doing harm ; that we protect not the guilty with our interest or power, nor varnish over their faults, from considerations of private interest or friendship, but fairly suffer truth to prevail, and crimes to be detected as they ought. Further, we must not pay court to, or delight in the vicious, for the sake of some wit and pleasantry, some superficial agreeableness, that sets off their vices ; we must never even seem to look on either villany or debauchery as objects of mirth only ; extol the entertaining qualities of him that ruins others by them, or the abilities of the man
who

who uses them to his neighbour's wrong. And here it must be observed, that voluntary intimacy with the wicked is one degree of shewing countenance to them, and ought to be avoided. Sometimes, indeed, nearness of relation ; connections in business ; the necessities of affairs ; at others common civility, and decency of behaviour, which, though a weaker tie, it may be very unadvisable to break through, oblige us to keep up acquaintances of this sort. Indeed, what St. Paul observes of the heathens of his days, that if a man would not company with the grossly wicked amongst them, he must needs go out of the world, is become too true of the professed Christians of ours. Besides, a reasonable prospect of reforming the faulty may justify one, especially of known and confirmed virtue in conversing much with them, and being, what our Saviour was very truly, though

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maliciously called, a friend of publicans and sinners. But to affect, or even permit, beyond what such reasons require, either friendships or familiarities with habitual transgressors of the laws of God, is, on many accounts, unallowable. ‘That be far from thee to do after this manner,’ as Abraham speaks upon another occasion; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee.

To such a degree, then, as every one can, he ought to avoid the very appearance of these improper attachments; or if he hath failed in point of precaution, must immediately think of the means of disengaging himself. Sometimes a steady adherence to our duty is enough to effect it, and such persons grow weary of an acquaintance, whose conduct reproves them, and whose ears are deaf to their sollicitations. But if

that proves otherwise, and either the scandalousness of their lives, or imminent danger of being at length prevented by them, requires a more speedy and abrupt step to be taken, we shall do well, on some flagrant occasion, to renounce all commerce with them at once, which at the same time that it sets us free, may possibly make on them, by the strength of the shock, a salutary impression. When the familiarity either cannot, or ought not to be broken off, the degrees of it, however, may be so moderated, or such exceptions to it contrived in particular instances, that paying strictly all due regard to them, we may be known to disapprove what they do amiss; stand at a visible distance from the faults of those to whom we are nearest, and be like our blessed Lord, holy, harmless, and undefiled; separate from sinners, though we preserve, when called to it, a course of easy demeanor

meanor in the midst of them. In proportion as our situation will permit us to vary our deportment from time to time, we may withhold from them, when any enormities of theirs demand it, the usual frankness and cheerfulness of our conversation, and restore it on the prospect of their amendment. We may also, and should be watchful to express our delight in every right action they perform, to signify inoffensively the affliction we suffer when they misbehave, and thus move their good-nature, if any be left in them, to give us pleasure, not pain, while we so evidently wish them well. But still sometimes neither these, nor the preceding methods can be tried; at others, they are sure or likely to prove ineffectual; and, therefore, we must also have recourse to that which the Apostle specifies in the last words

of the text, reproving them. Various persons, indeed, on various accounts, we cannot reprove for their works of darkness, either having no access to them, or no title to use that freedom: or at best we can only convey oblique reproof under some agreeable, or, however, inoffensive disguise; or make a small advance on the borders of plain speech, observing well on which side they are most accessible; or watching for the season when good dispositions either prevail or may be excited. Nor should we neglect any one of these honest artifices; for the skilful application of them may possibly enable us to gain ground by unperceived degrees on their inordinate passions and bad habits, and thus carry them to such lengths towards reformation, as we should in vain have attempted, had they at first perceived the whole of our design.

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But, in many cases, more direct and home remonstrances to the faulty are necessary; which therefore, such as with propriety can, are bound to make; and, whatever reluctance they may find to so painful a work, must, as the Scripture directs, in any wise rebuke their neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him; for omitting it is in the same place interpreted to be hating him in their heart. Timely admonition may stop him short just at the entrance upon a wrong course, and snatch him out of imminent hazard unhurt: but those who are farther gone, may yet be reclaimed by a lively representation of their guilt and danger, of which, perhaps, they had a very inadequate, if any, apprehension. But then we must be very careful, unless we would entirely lose all influence both at present and for the future, that we never bring a charge without having incontestible proof of its truth; that a genuine

friendly

friendly concern be evidently the principle of all we say ; that we express more sorrow than anger, when circumstances will allow it, as they peculiarly do when the person blamed hurts himself more than any one else ; that we use tender expostulations by choice ; and harsh expressions, but above all terrifying and threatening ones, when nothing else will prevent ruin. And even when the strongest marks of disapprobation and displeasure are needful, they should ever be shewn without insult and haughtiness ; without the least appearance of loving to find fault ; without exaggerating any thing, or treating the frailties of human nature too severely ; indeed, with such attention to acknowledge and point out whatever, in the general character of the person concerned, is valuable, or in the particular circumstances of the case excusable, as may reconcile him, if

possible, to the liberties taken with him, by the conviction that they are taken unwillingly.

Many other precautions for the better success of this good work, every one's prudence will suggest to him in the several instances that come before him, according to the nature of the offence, the temper of the offender, and especially the degree of authority which the reprover hath over him. Sometimes all authority is best laid aside, and softened into mere persuasion; sometimes a moderate share of its weight is wanted to bear down a less complying disposition; at others, its whole force is little enough to fetter a stubborn spirit. Here, then, we must each of us think and act for ourselves; but with this consideration ever present to our minds, that not only a total contempt of this duty, but a neglect
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of discharging it in the most effectual manner that is incumbent on us, will be imputed to us for guilt, as it was in the case of Eli, who having contented himself with greatly blaming his sons for what he ought absolutely to have forbidden them, and deterred them from; 'I will judge his 'house for ever,' saith God, 'for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his 'sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.' He that saith unto the wicked, 'Thou art righteous, him shall 'the people curse; nations shall abhor 'him; but to them that rebuke him, shall 'be delight, and a good blessing shall come 'upon them.'

It must, however, be confessed, that neither is every one qualified equally for such a work: some by nature being little capable of exerting themselves, or moving

others; and some again, of so warm passions, that they must not allow them scope in the best cause; yet no one is left without the means of doing somewhat towards it; and all that we are able to do, without neglecting our other obligations, is our duty. Whoever can look with just the same eye on good and bad, provided his own present advantage be out of the question, hath no love of religion or virtue in him; and whoever takes no notice of the difference, will be shrewdly suspected of not seeing it, or not regarding it. The coolest spectator of other wrong things that are done, thinks immediately, when any happen to affect himself, that all ought to interest themselves in his behalf; indeed can hardly do it too much. And therefore, when things are done which affect the happiness of others, the welfare of society, the honour of our Maker, we ought to
 interest

interest ourselves for these. Perhaps we may object that our concern will be fruitless, and so perhaps it may; but at least uneasy sentiments on such occasions, however ineffectual otherwise, may improve us considerably, provided we carefully restrain them, which itself will be a profitable inward exercise, from running into excess. Besides, whoever preserves this due medium between indifference and vehemence, as he will be always prudently seeking methods of reclaiming, or at least of checking the guilty, and consequently securing the innocent; so he will find more than any one else can suggest to him; and though hated by the bad, and despised by the thoughtless, for this troublesome activity, will be esteemed by many fellow-labourers, many converts whom he hath helped to make; many ready to fall, whom he hath staid and strengthened. Or let him have ever so

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much cause to say, in other respects, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, yet surely his judgment is with the Lord, and his work with his God.

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PROVERBS, xix. 1.

*Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity,
than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a
fool.*

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ONE principal mark of true religion is its tendency to make men first good, then happy. Precepts of piety and virtue, unattended with rewards, will always be ineffectual; and promises of reward, independent of piety and virtue, must, of necessity, be false. Christianity, therefore, comprehends both, and proposes them equally to all mankind, requiring obedience from the greatest as a condition of God's favour, and offering eternal felicity to the meanest, on performance of their duties. One of these is, that they be content with their condition, and neither mur-

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mur at all against God, who never gives them cause, nor complain of men more than they have cause, nor be dejected in their own minds ; but compose and support themselves by attending to the comforts of the state they are in, as well as the inconveniencies of it. With this I choose to begin, and to insist upon it largely ; because, when once the poor are convinced that they may be happy, they will naturally and cheerfully endeavour to become so, for which end they must learn,

Secondly, To be humble ; a virtue closely connected with the former. As pride is usually the origin of discontent, so discontent in nature nourishes pride, till after thinking, falsely, their present situation too bad for them, men come by degrees to think scarce any sufficiently good. Now all may find good reason for humility in the imperfections

tions and frailties of human nature; but the poor have additional subjects of mortification. They see and feel themselves inferior to most around them; dependant, probably, on some for their livelihood, and are excluded from the possibility of many improvements and advantages which others enjoy. Still it is no cause of dissatisfaction; and to make comparisons only to disquiet yourselves is great folly. But to make them that, from the inferiority wherein you are placed, you may acquire a propriety of principles and behaviour, is an indispensable duty.

Those minds must be grievously hardened that can have no impression made on them by such peculiarly strong calls to be modest and submissive. Nor will this prove a less unhappy disposition than it is a faulty one; but in all probability you will
suffer

suffer more from the absurd haughtiness of your temper than all the hardships of your outward circumstances. Instead of esteeming or pitying you, the world will despise and scorn you. For the son of Sirach expresses no more than what every one in some measure feels, when having said, ‘Three sorts of men my soul hateth, and I am greatly offended at their life,’ he puts down, in the first place, a poor man that is proud. Pride in those who should be the farthest from it is extremely disgusting, as it insensibly leads to insolent behaviour. Now insolence to superiors may produce unspeakable mischiefs to you ; but will always produce some ; and though it be confined to your equals and inferiors, will be the source of perpetual uneasiness as well as guilt. Yet, I am afraid, it is exceedingly common for the lower ranks to use those who are but a little below them with such

contempt

contempt and harshness as they seldom or never experience, and would not tolerate in their superiors. But surely, then, you should be willing to give the treatment you expect to receive, and seeing, as you must, how well condescension becomes your betters, think how ill assuming and overbearing becomes you.

But of all sorts of pride in the poor, the strangest and most pernicious is that which tempts not a few of them to imagine that they are of too much consequence to do any thing for their own maintenance. Indeed, when they have formerly been of good rank, and lived in plenty, especially when their fall from it is not owing to misconduct, it should be the endeavour of their relations and friends to provide for them in some degree suitable to what they once were. But if such as are especially concerned

cerned either cannot or will not do this, there is little room to expect others should contribute enough towards it to be effectual. And therefore the unhappy persons, whose case it is, unless Providence raise them upon some unlooked-for support, sink down of course to the level of the common poor; and it cannot be more the duty of the charitable to help them, than it is theirs to help themselves by any sort of honest employment for which they are qualified. Once Heaven had placed you in a higher sphere; now it hath reduced you to a lower; the occupations of the latter are as much incumbent upon you at present as those of the former were before; and your attention to them will have ample reward by the Disposer of all things. You must support yourself either by virtuous diligence or by vicious courses. The latter nothing can justify; the former, in
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whatever way you are called to exercise it, will be no reproach, but an honour to you. And the rich and great, far from disowning or rejecting their poor kindred and acquaintance, for condescending to any useful business when necessity requires, ought to encourage and applaud them. For it is an excellent mark of a right and good mind, that they rather choose to work with quietness, and eat their own bread, than importune others, or lead themselves into temptations. And, indeed, the temptations arising from poverty and distress are so very dangerous to those who have lived in affluence and credit, that as soon as ever they find difficulties coming upon them (if they have any regard to a good conscience), they must immediately reduce their own expences, lower the appearance, and expectations of those who depend upon them, and so conduct every thing as may least

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expose them to the hazard of acting amiss, and best secure them an honest subsistence. For whatever a false honour may suggest to the contrary, better is he that laboureth and aboundeth in all things, than he that boasteth himself and wanteth bread. The mention of this matter hath led me insensibly to a third duty of the poor, and a very important one,

That of industry, to which humility will greatly incline them; nor will contentment be at all inconsistent with it. For a principal reason why the poor may be justly contented, is, that by diligence they may go on very comfortably, and their being well enough satisfied with their present situation is no manner of reason against endeavouring to better it, when opportunity offers: Every one, indeed, is bound to be industri-

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ous in a way fuitable to his rank, and contribute his proportion to the common good in which he shares. Those of high degree are able to do much good singly; the poor have each of them very little separate power, but, considered as a collective body, it is on their application and labour that the wealth and strength of nations, all the conveniencies and elegancies of life, indeed the peace and good order of societies depend: for nothing but right employment will keep them out of wrong. These considerations make their diligence of infinite importance to the public; and there are others, besides their interest in the public, that make it of equal importance to themselves. It is true, in point of conscience, the rich are no less obliged to it than you, but in point of worldly necessity the difference is very wide; for in your situation indulging idleness and its companions can

last but a very short time, and then will bring after it such dreadful consequences of distress, and reproach, and temptation to every thing bad (extending not only to you, but to all that belong to you), that you must resolve to follow some honest employment closely. Be it ever so much against your liking at first, you will certainly in time come to be very well pleased with it. Every one that hath persevered hath found it so. And then you will spend the rest of your days in satisfaction and comfort. You will be at peace within, and be respected both by your equals and your betters: if you have children, you will look upon them with delight, and they upon you with gratitude; you will make a provision against sickness and accidents, and when you come to old age, you will be able to afford yourself the rest and quiet you want, because you were willing to take

take pains before. Whereas, they who make ease and pleasure the business of their early years, will find shame and sorrow the portion of the remainder. They wickedly neglected the appointed way of supporting themselves, and such as do will always have bitter experience of what it is to crave support from the bounty of another. ‘The life of him that dependeth on another man’s table,’ saith the son of Sirach, ‘is not to be counted for life; begging is sweet in the mouth of the shameful, but in his belly there shall burn a fire:’ sayings not designed against persons whom Providence hath rendered incapable of supplying their own necessities, but against those who would not be industrious when they could: Which leads me to a fourth duty of the poor;

And that is honesty. For to beg instead

of working, is one sort of dishonesty: to undertake any work for another, and not do it diligently, is a second sort, often a very provoking, sometimes a very mischievous one. Yet there is a third still grosser, to which idleness tempts them but too powerfully, mentioned in Agur's wise prayer; 'Lest I be poor, and steal.' Now stealth, either open or secret, how commonly soever it be committed, is much too plainly a sin to be in general defended, and therefore I need not prove to you the unlawfulness of it. But there are two cases, notwithstanding, in which some of the poor seem not to think it any fault at all. When either a very small matter is taken away, or it is from a very rich person, which makes it small to him. But every one hath the same right to the least part of his property, that he hath to the greatest. And let any one be ever so wealthy,

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wealthy, his wealth is his own ; and though unquestionably he ought to give of it to the poor, yet they have no manner of authority to take it without his consent. If they had, it is easy to see into what universal confusion the exercise of this authority would put things. But farther, small misdemeanors of this kind occasion great disquiet ; men apprehend themselves unsafe in all about them, know not whom to trust, and the innocent are often suspected, and suffer for what the guilty do. Besides, almost all offenders begin with little faults ; and from those they venture gradually on to worse and worse, till they come to make no scruple of the most capital crimes, and perhaps fall under the sentence due to them. Always remember, therefore, to beware of even small sins, and carefully observe one rule more, that when any thing is committed to your trust,

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being dishonest in that, and disposing of it in any manner which you know you ought not, and are not allowed, is one of the basest kinds of stealing. Wastefulness also, and even mere negligence, approach to the same sin, for by both you wastefully diminish what is not your own. But the most active cause of dishonesty among the poor, is, that finding a great deal of time and pains requisite to get but a small matter, they are strongly tempted to shorten their trouble by unfair methods. And possibly you may thus gain some advantage for a time; but very possibly also you may fail and be discovered, and punished even for your first attempt; or if not, every new attempt will expose you to the same danger, and it is not one in great numbers that escapes long. Besides, the continual consciousness of your guilt, and the fear of being found out and hated, and scorned, ever after, will be a continual

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continual torment to you. Nay, if you are only suspected, and cannot fully confute the suspicion, which a guilty person can never do, this alone, in all probability, may be enough to ruin you. For the livelihood of the poor depends almost intirely on their character, and their character chiefly consists in their honesty. That will make amends for considerable defects in other points; but nothing will make amends for want of that. Or could you escape every evil which you justly fear, through this whole life, remember another is to follow it very soon, in which you must account for all your deeds.

A fifth duty of the poor, without which your honesty will never be secure, and the fruits of your industry be very foolishly thrown away, is frugality. Indeed, to deny yourselves what you can well afford,
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and really want, would be cruel and unnatural, suffering the worst inconveniences of poverty without need. But to make your straight circumstances yet straighter for the sake of idle gratifications, and distress yourself in necessities only to indulge in trifles and vanities, delicate food, showy dress, ensnaring diversions, is every way wrong. For you will be hankering after more and more pleasures, till they quite beggar you; your superiors, whom you affect to imitate, will despise you; your equals will hate and censure you; and your children, for whom, at this rate, you provide nothing but a bad example, will have cause, I had almost said, to curse you: whereas, by avoiding unnecessary expences, you will preserve the fruits of your labour intire; be able to make good use of advantages; to stand your ground under losses and disappointments (for they must be expected); to

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lay up for yourselves, if you prove to have occasion, if not, for those who come after you: nay, to give also of your little, and exchange it for treasures in heaven. Saving is very different from being covetous; it is the surest foundation for being bountiful; and even the poor should extend bounty to any that are still poorer, whenever they can really spare it. Nature and reason call upon them to do so, agreeable to which the Apostle calls upon men to work with their own hands, that they may have to give to him that needeth; and as our Saviour hath taught us that our charity shall be estimated in proportion to our abilities, the lowest have as much encouragement as the highest to do, even in this way, all the good they can.

A sixth virtue closely connected with frugality is sobriety. One would think
that

that they who find themselves continually in fraights could have little temptation to be guilty of excesses. But uneasiness at their condition drives some; a false notion of recruiting their spirits invites others; and unmeaning custom seduces yet more into that destructive vice of drinking; which, after soothing you, perhaps, with a short-lived gaiety, and forgetfulness of sorrow, will greatly augment the dejection of your mind, as well as the difficulty of your affairs, and thus force you almost to a repetition of the same evil remedy, which will be followed of course by an increase of the same evil, till your fortunes and healths are both completely ruined. Your morals too, for the most part, by indulgence in this one respect, will be gradually corrupted in every other, even if you do escape those desperate fallies of wickedness which prove more speedily fatal. Your families,

milies, at the same time, if you have any, will be abandoned to wretchedness; your children, perhaps, murdered in their infancy by giving them the same liquors with which you are more leisurely destroying yourselves; or, if they do survive, are pretty sure to inherit, from such parents, nothing but bad habits of body and mind. If, therefore, you have any sense either of prudence or humanity, you will surely avoid this treacherous sin; or, if you have fallen into it, you will renounce it instantly, and resolutely bear the uneasiness which abstaining from it may give you for a while (for you will certainly overcome it by perseverance), rather than plunge forward to your utter undoing here and hereafter.

A seventh duty of the poor, which cannot be passed over from this place, is that
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of chastity, a duty, indeed, of all persons, but so far particularly incumbent on them, as the transgression of it brings them to more immediate ruin. In one sex it is followed by total loss of honest employment and reputation; by contempt and scorn even of the men who have seduced them; by grievous temptation to destroy the fruits of their criminal pleasures, and to become abandoned to common prostitution, and with it to every misery of human life. In the other sex it is almost always accompanied with breach of solemn promises; with shocking hardness of heart, when the utmost affection hath been professed; with heavy expences that often lead to the grossest dishonesty. And both sexes in common it exposes to loathsome and fatal diseases, and to a dreadful sentence of future condemnation: for they which do such things, the Scripture hath declared, shall not inherit
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the kingdom of heaven. Beware, then, of a sin so peculiarly dangerous, and for that purpose beware of every indiscretion that leads to it.

The eighth, and last duty, I have to recommend, but one particularly implied in preaching the Gospel to you, is a serious and deep reverence for religion. Religion is intended, not only for the direction, but comfort of all degrees of men; and all have need enough of it, but you the most by far. Others have honours, or pleasures, or wealth, elegant amusements or curious inquiries to engage their thoughts; but you have little to sweeten this world to you, but the expectation of a better. Seek your consolation, therefore, in what is abundantly capable of giving it to you; make the precepts of the Gospel your business, and its promises your joy. Christianity

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tianity is peculiarly formed for your benefit. Its laws are your charter, by which you claim a right to love and pity from your superiors as members of the same body; and we, its ministers, are your advocates to plead your cause with them, authorized to offer them eternal happiness for being kind to you; to denounce condemnation against them if they use you in any one respect cruelly; and to assure you, at the same time, that the worst treatment they can give you shall turn to your good. Think, then, how justly St. James hath declared God's love of the poor in this world, who are rich in faith; and let others, if they will, be vicious and profane, but let no man beguile you of your reward, either by corrupting your principles, or misleading your practice. Religion hath graciously provided for you the repose and comfort of this sacred day,

which

which else you had never known : make it not a time of acting contrary to religion, but stately use the opportunities it gives you of learning and being reminded of your several duties, which you must be sensible you need ; of having the honour to join with the highest of your fellow-creatures in presenting petitions and praises to God in his house, and approaching his holy table. The remainder of your sabbath employ partly in considering your ways, and improving your hearts by reading, meditation, and prayer in private, partly in a cheerful, but harmless and prudent enjoyment of the leisure which Heaven hath allowed you. When the days of labour return, recommend yourselves every morning to the blessing of the Almighty, return him thanks every night for his protection, and offer up to him in your hearts the work of each day as done in obedience to his will,

and in hopes of his reward; for these things you will find a support and refreshment beyond all belief. In your whole conversation learn both to avoid and abhor that monstrous custom of oaths and curses which are intermixed continually in the common discourse of too many of the poor, with great irreverence towards God, who hath expressly forbid them; to the great horror and grief of all good persons; with great danger of running into frequent perjuries, and all manner of profaneness; and without any pretence of profit or pleasure, to make amends for so much sin. I cannot, and need not go through the other obligations of religion at present; your attendance here, your bibles and other good books at home, will sufficiently remind you of the nature and importance of them; but I beg you not to imagine, because you are each of you singly of little consequence

quence in the world, that God will take little notice of your conduct ; but think and act like the Psalmist : ‘ I am small and of no reputation, yet do I not forget thy commandments.’ There is none beneath God’s attention, any more than above it. The meanest things on earth were made and are continually preserved and inspected by him. But, indeed, the most considerable thing on earth is the behaviour of his rational creatures ; and whether that be right or wrong, is of infinite moment in his sight ; but whether they be high or low, of none at all. He regardeth not the rich man more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands, and shall account to him for their deeds. Our blessed Redeemer preached the Gospel to the poor, as much as to the rich ; he laid down his life equally for both ; the holy Spirit offers equally to both the sanctifying influences

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of his grace ; the souls of both are equally capable of, and will be equally consigned to, everlasting happiness or misery. ‘ I saw,’ saith St. John, ‘ a throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them ; and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.’ This awful scene first imprint strongly on your own minds, then on all you can, especially on those who belong to you ; you have little else to give them : but if you give them effectually a practical sense of their duty to God and man, it is an inheritance beyond all treasures. You must see how wretched and how miserable, by their own wickedness, multitudes of your own rank are ; suffer it not to be the

case of those who are dearest to you; but use the little spare time you have (for you will always have some), and the little ability you possess (for God will assist you), to instil into their hearts such early principles of piety and virtue, as may afford you just hopes of their being good and happy by your means in this world, and then following you to increase your blessedness in the next.

F I N I S.



